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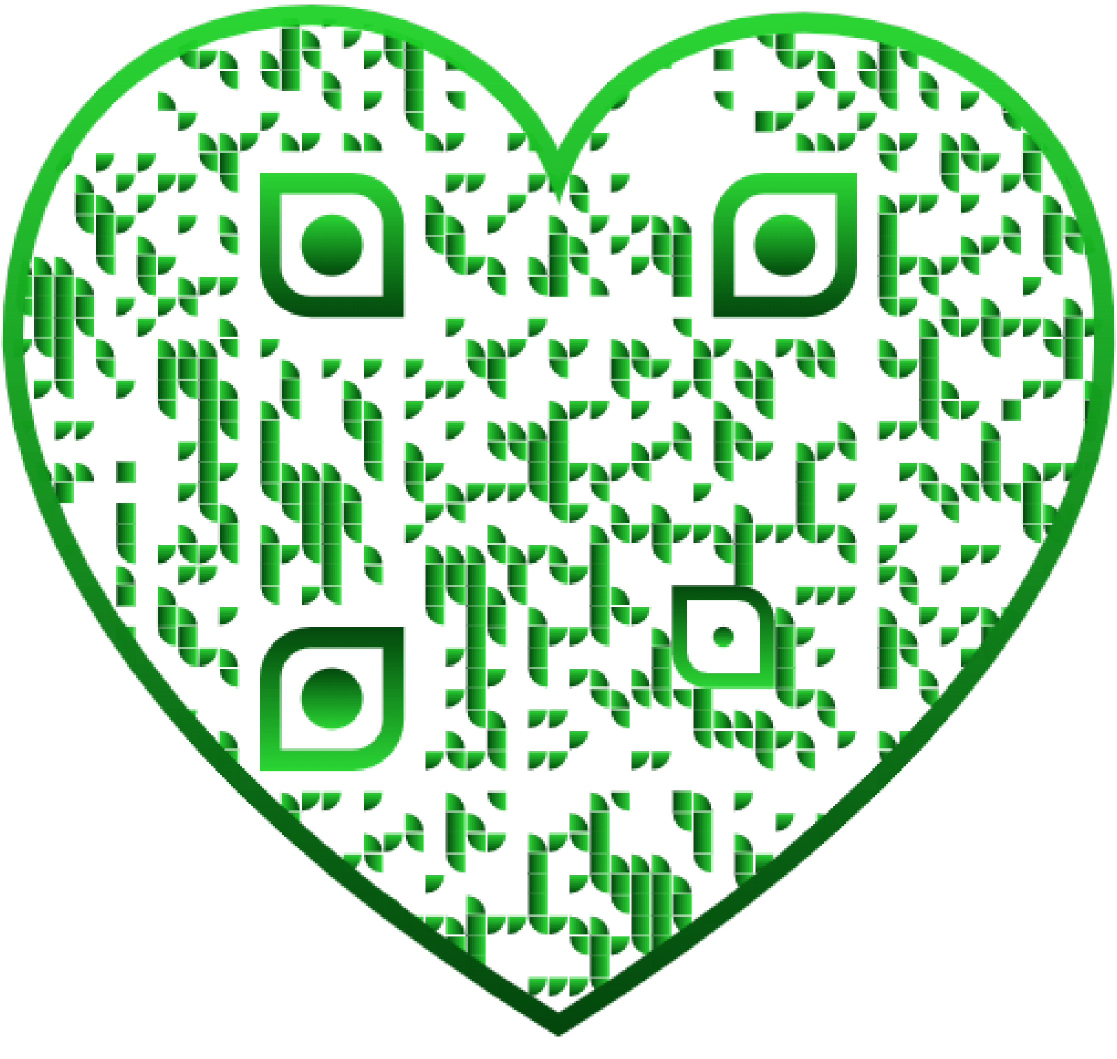

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November 2025
Issue 457

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CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE MECHANICS magazine takes all responsible steps to ensure advice and technical tips are written by experienced and competent people. We also advise readers to seek further professional advice if they are unsure at any time. Anything technical written by the editor is exempt – he's rubbish with spanners.

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YAMAHA
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XJR1300

'...On a bicycle made for two...''

It's time to talk about something close to my heart. Or rather close to my backside. Yes, it's 'rear-end rant time'!

It's about the current trend for short rear-ends on bikes. I know we shouldn't be talking about such modernity, but they are here and have been for quite some time.

Back in 2005, I rode a-then new Triumph Speed Triple. I love Speed Triples and this one was great, but the pillion provision and size of the pillion seat was so marginal, it may as well have been non-existent.

I was reminded of this when riding the 'old' 2002 Yamaha XJR1300 SP relatively recently for this issue and recalling riding the 2015 model a decade ago. The older bike was better as an everyday motorcycle, even if the handling wasn't quite as good. Look at the rear-ends: more space on the older bike and a better pillion proposition. And the newer bike's pillion seat shape looks pretty uncomfortable, too!

I'm guessing it's 'design fashion' that dictates the 'short' rear-end as it seems most motorcycle designers don't want anything overhanging the rear wheel anymore: especially not a pillion's buttocks…

Sadly, this carries on into the modern retro: check out the Kawasaki Z900RS rear seat compared to an old Z1000. I mean, I fully understand that you may as well do away with the upholstered Post-it notes that masquerade as pillion seats on sports bikes – but retros and even modern naked bikes are supposed to be spacious and practical!

If only it would be possible to make two versions of a bike: say, one with a longer rear sub-frame and bigger seat for real people who have friends who want to go on the back of a bike. What do you say?

Bertie Simmonds
Editor
BSimmonds@Mortons.co.uk

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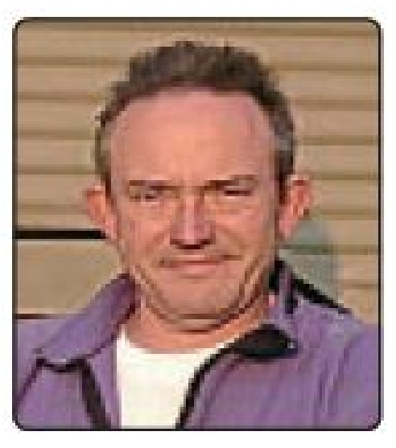
Andy Bolas

VJMC legend!

A double helping of Andy B. He's sorting out his Suzuki SV650S and has nearly completed a CMM reader's GS1000.



Kev Raymond

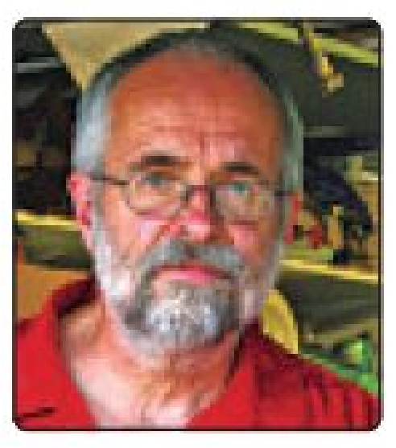
Bay-Watch Boy

Kev dives in where others fear to tread water: looking at the latest and often nastiest basket-case bikes up for sale…

Jeff Ware

Blade sharpener!

Poor Jeff is sad that he's sold his Urban Tiger FireBlade. But don't worry, he's going to get it back and restore it!



Mark Haycock

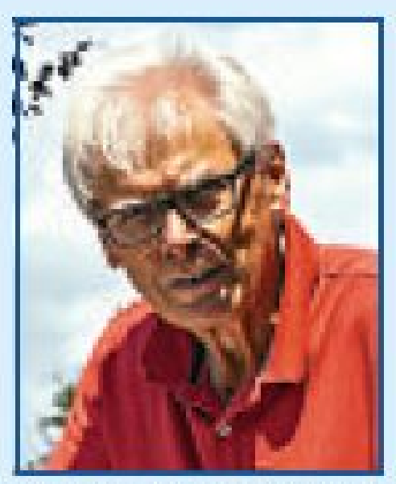
Forza Four!

Mark is still elbow-deep in the gizzards of the 400 Four's motor and he's sorting out the timing.

Pip Higham

Engineering wizard!

We're loving the three-cylinder Suzuki Invader, but you'll need a translator for his column (again) this month!



John Nutting

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!

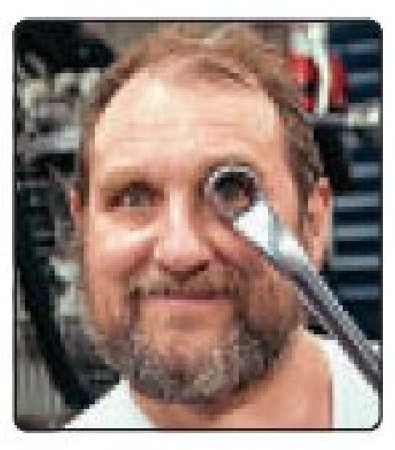
Patience of Job

Indeed he has much patience… You'll finally see John's lovely write-up of the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the mighty Honda CB400 Four in this issue. It's been ready for a while, but we've had so much to get in! Apologies to Nutters and fans of the Four. Alos, we carry on with our 400 Four project in this issue from Mark. So it's a 400 Four fest!

Mike Cowton

Unsung hero!!

As well as helping to spot errors, Mike also puts lots of kit to the test for us. Check it out on page 11.



Ralph Ferrand

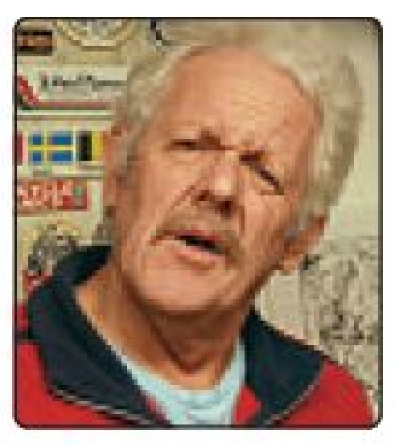
Making a stand…

We all need them in the workshop/garage: bike stands. Otherwise known as paddock stands. Ralph tests some.

Blue Miller

Events Queen!

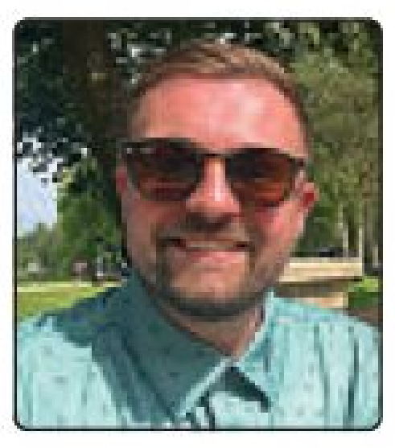
With the days getting shorter, our events section is warmly ensconced in the news section 'til spring!



Steve Cooper

Scooperman!

Steve is here with the latest on his Rickuki – it looks good on its wheels. Oh, and a Suzuki SV650 buyer's guide.



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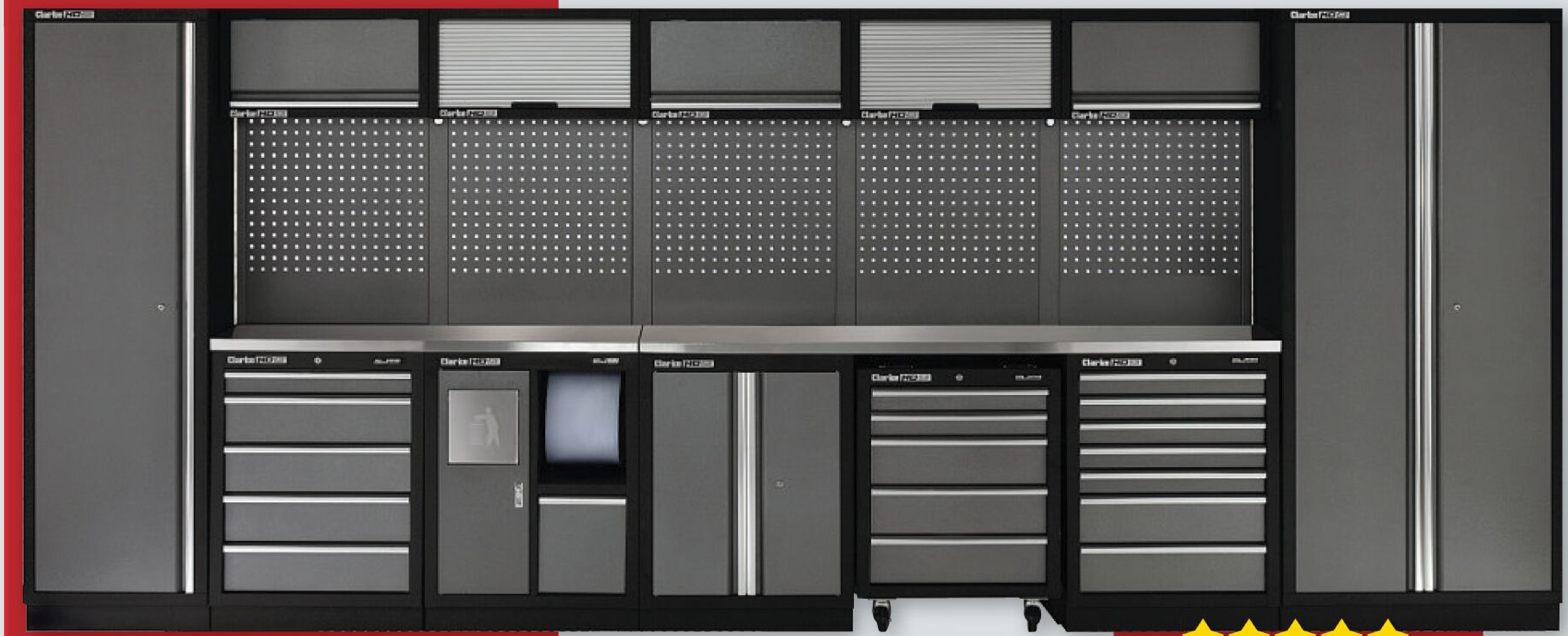

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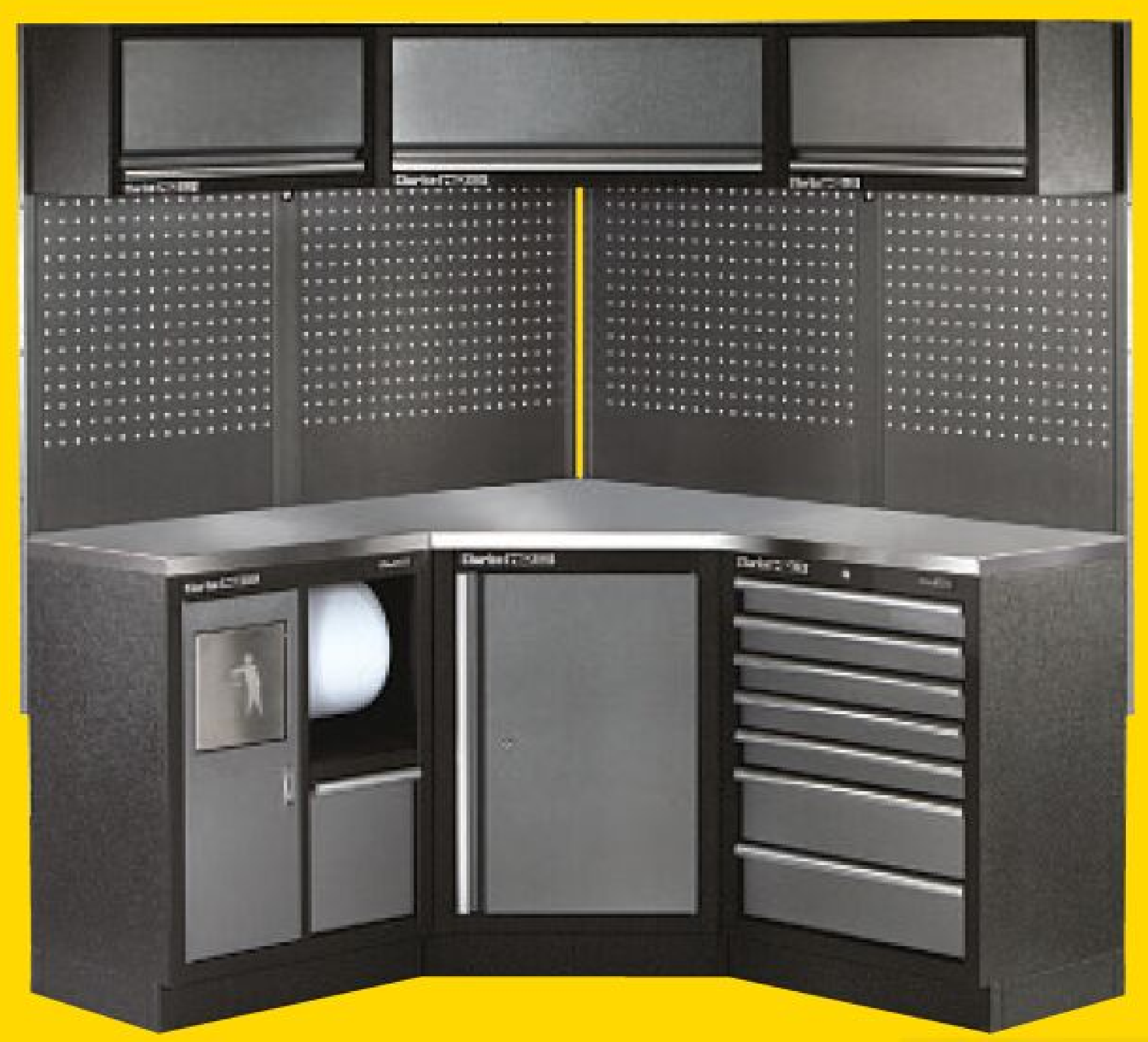

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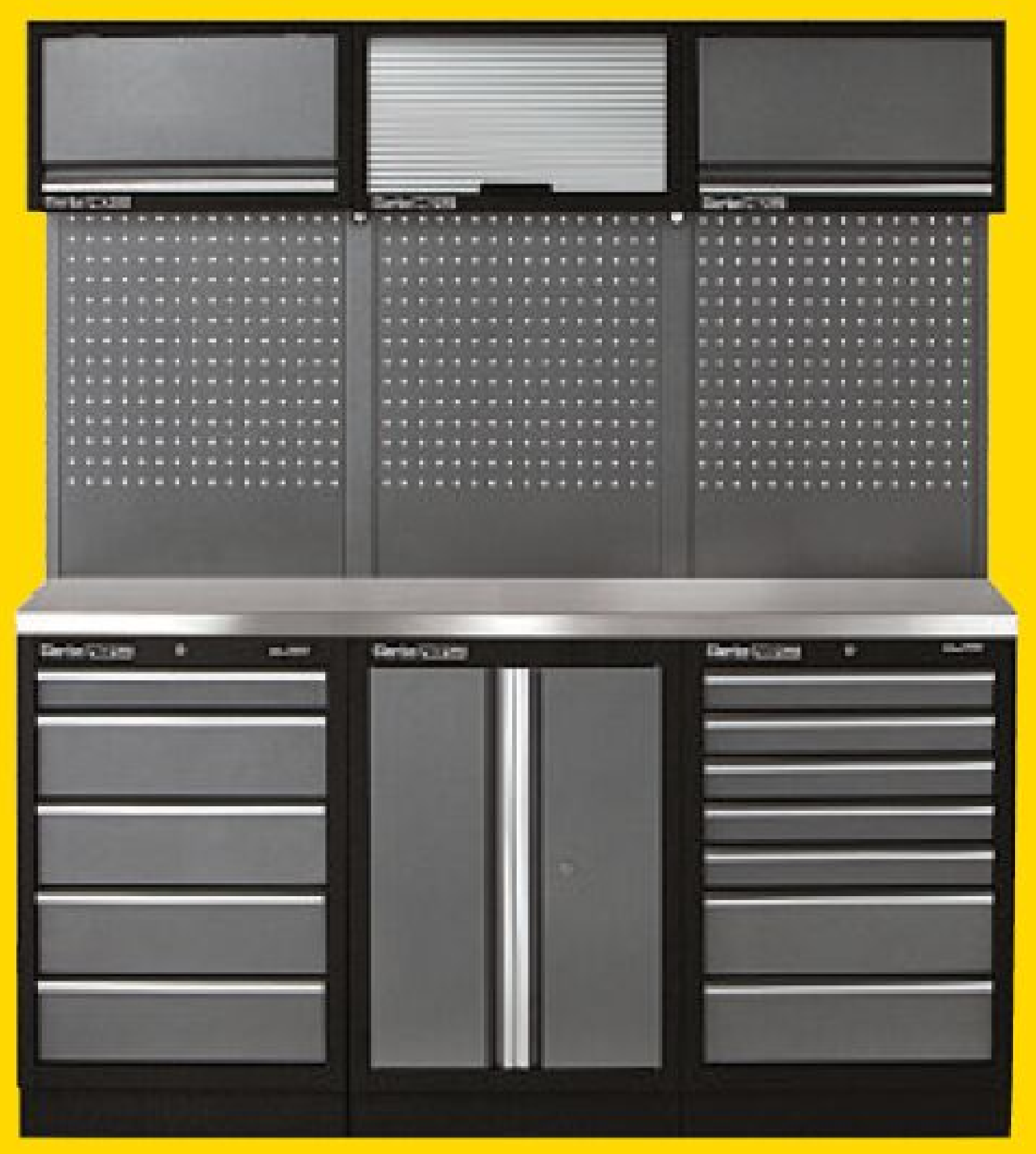

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WORKSHOP cmm

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HONDA
SUPER SPORT
400FOUR
HONDA

19
19

Michelle Duff: 1939-2025

WORDS: **BERTIE SIMMONDS** PIC: **NICK NICHOLLS/MORTONS ARCHIVE**

Currently Canada's only grand prix race winner, Michelle Duff passed away aged 85 on 23 July.

Born Michael Alan Duff on 13 December, 1939, in Toronto, Canada, Mike became fascinated by motorcycle racing and motorcycles at a young age.

His natural talent was obvious, therefore in 1960 he left for England to live out his dream of racing on the British short circuits as well as the Isle of Man and in the grand prix racing circus. His determination immediately showed, and his reputation quickly rose, hence by 1964 Phil Read recommended him as his teammate on the first official Yamaha factory team in the GPs.

Even today, Duff is the only Canadian to have won a grand prix. He won the 1964 250cc grand prix in Belgium, and in 1965 won the 125cc Dutch TT and the 250cc Finnish grand prix, along with a total of 24 podiums during an illustrious carrer.

Unfortunately, at the end of the 1965 season he was badly hurt while testing a new prototype racer in Japan and his injuries caused him major problems for the rest of his career. His return to racing in 1966 was the subject of a Canadian film documentary called 'Ride for Your Life'.

Mike married in 1963, and he and his wife had a son and a daughter. However, by the early 1980s after many years of questioning and self-doubt, in 1984 Mike decided to change his names to Michelle Ann Duff and begin gender reassignment surgery. Dropping out of her former motorcycle racing life, she became a civil servant in Ontario but also dabbled in wildlife photography and wrote children's literature.

Thankfully, Michelle eventually did come back to her first passion of motorcycle racing, attending a number of historic race events and also penning two books: 'Make Haste Slowly' about her bike-racing days along with a second edition which included more on her transition into Michelle. Eventually she moved to Nova Scotia where she lived a quiet life with her beloved pets. cmm

cmm Stuff

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www.sealey.co.uk

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We love this as it's almost 'too cool for school'. The Furygan Shard Jacket is one of those useful and functional jackets that also looks good off the bike.

You've got D3O shoulder and elbow protectors, a back-protector pocket for a suitable Furygan D3O back protector (not supplied), and reflective inserts for dark nights. Constructed from tough polyester, you've also got a decent ventilation system for warm riders but also a bonded, breathable and waterproof liner – as well as a removable thermal liner. Neoprene inserts at the collar aid comfort, a jacket-to-trouser connection loop stops it riding up when you're on the bike, and the hood is removable. Available in black and black/white in sizes S to 5XL.

www.furygan.com

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WEISE NORVIK JEANS

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We rather like this funky idea – a new take on helmet graphics. The NEXX Y.100R Subsonic is a sports-touring helmet made in Europe with ACU Gold approval and the lightweight shell is shaped for aerodynamic performance, with a double-blade rear spoiler to reduce drag and neck strain.

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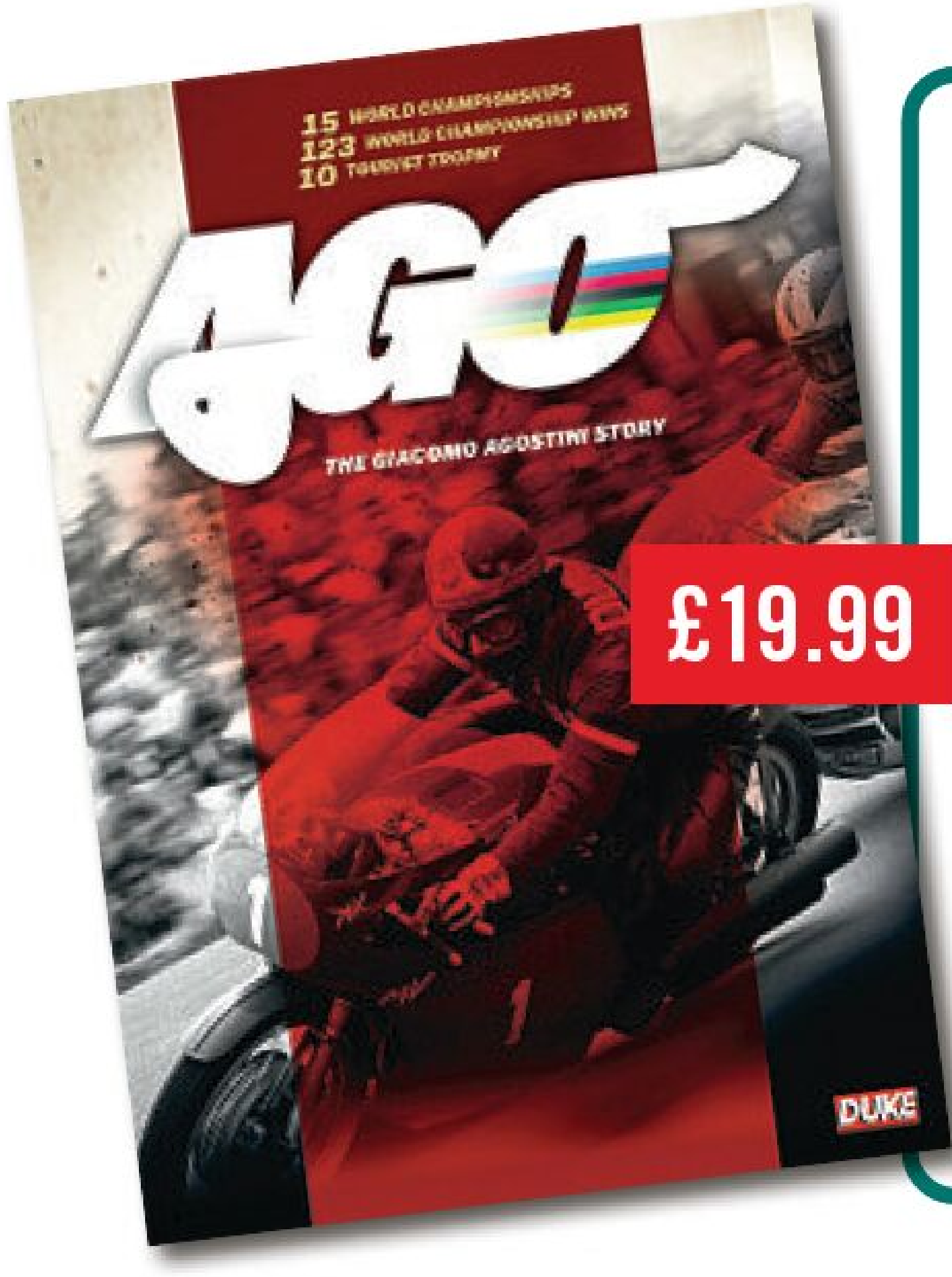

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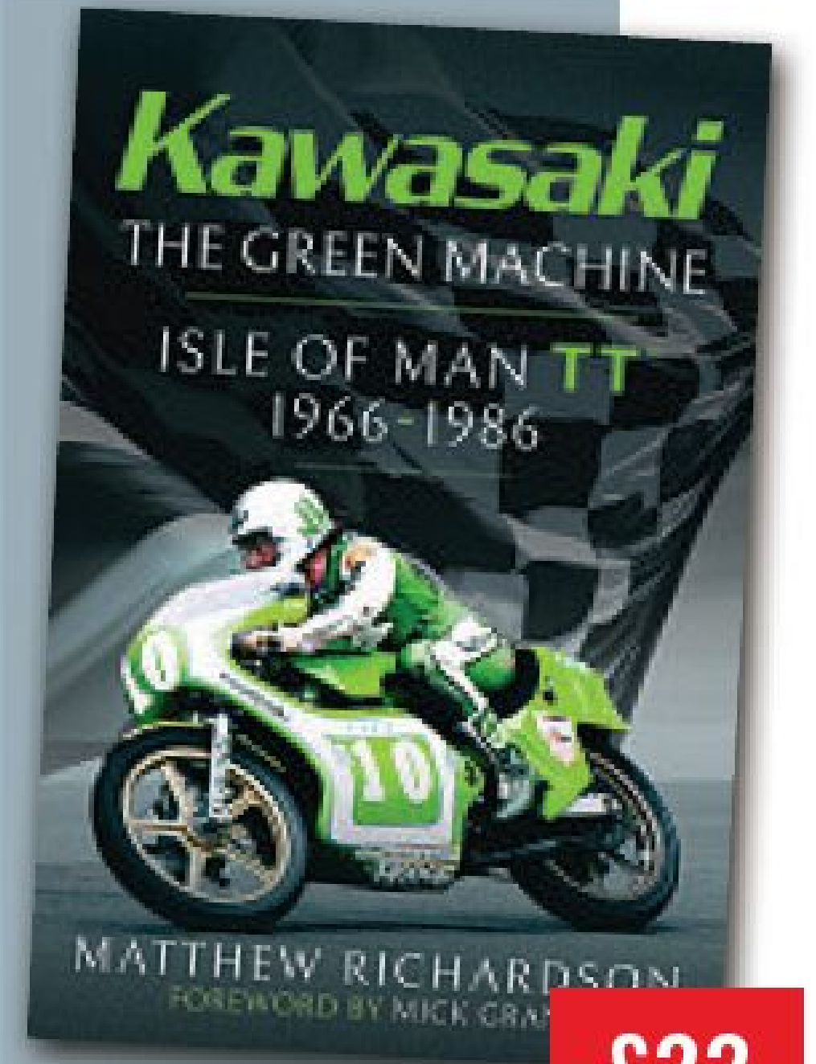

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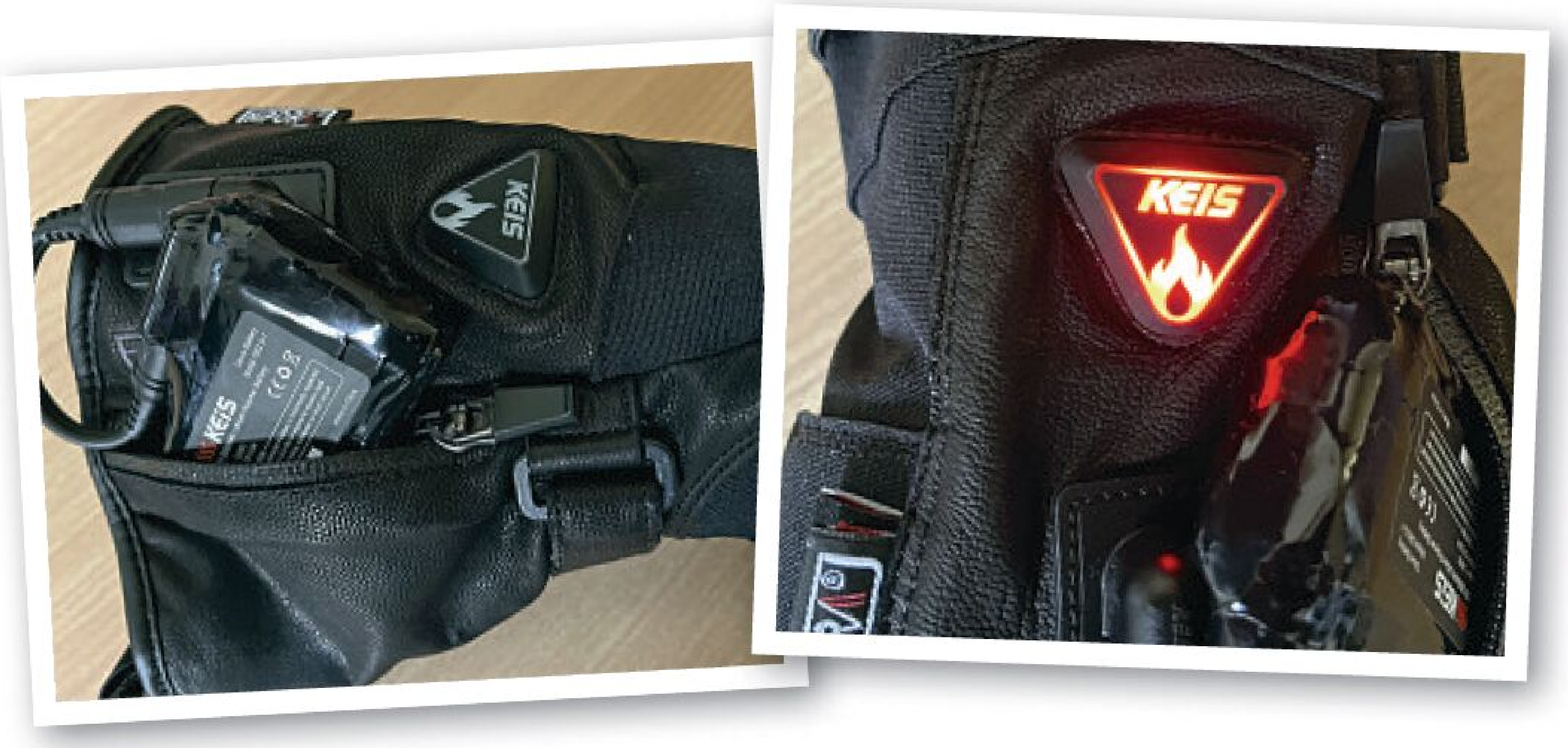
Keis has raised the bar with these G901 Extreme Gloves. They are a sports-touring glove, manufactured in supple goatskin leather, which is thinner, softer than cowhide.

What's more, you are treated to more dexterity and improved feedback and feel from the bike's controls than previously. Keeping water out and allowing perspiration to escape is thanks to a bonded Hipora waterproof and breathable membrane plus a generous layer of 3M Thinsulate insulation. These have a handy loop located inside each glove, so you can secure them over the cuffs of your jacket. The 901s are tested to the latest CE safety standard and boast KO-1 protectors over the knuckles. You are also treated to extra reinforcement over the back of the fingers compared to earlier gloves.

While the 901s can be linked to the bike's battery, these are dual-powered. I opted for the use of the lithium polymer battery packs. Once charged, each slots easily into a zipped closure pocket on the cuff and they don't get 'in the way' at all. Then just tap the triangular-shaped heat source button on the back of each glove to reveal three heat settings: red (hottest), yellow and green. Warm-up is quick and I found the middle setting adequate. Switching between the settings is easy when on the move, too. Recharge is around three hours and on 'red' you can expect 1.5 hours of warmth and on 'green' around three hours.



The Keis Micro Carbon-Fibre heating panels with their 'Far InfraRed Radiation' heat-generating technology provide the controllable warmth. The G901s use a new heating element layout which runs not only over the back of the hands, but also around the fingertips and between the fingers. My hands were lovely and toasty!

For me, these are some of the best heated gloves on the market. Available in sizes 3XS-3XL, they have a lifetime guarantee on the heating element and a two-year warranty on the gloves. J

Invest in a spare battery set (£85 with charger) so you can stow an extra set away in your tank bag!

Mike Cowton

www.keisapparel.com

SHARK AERON EDGY

A number of MotoGP racers can be seen wearing the Shark Aeron GP helmet, and with that success in mind, Shark turned its attention to road riders, and those who occasionally like to take on a track day.

At first glance the Aeron (no GP here) looks like a track helmet, but it is designed for everyday use. Its shell is made of COVA, a blend of carbon-fibre and aramid, so you can expect excellent impact resistance with very low weight. The Aeron surpasses the ECE 22.06 specifications, so it's safe and has the reassurance of the faithful double-D-ring strap.

I have been wearing the Aeron for a few months now, and whilst it took several rides to bed in, it was never uncomfortable and now fits me like a glove. It did push up my cheeks into that 'bunny cheeks' look, which I don't get with other helmets, but I guess it's secure on my head and due to its light weight, it has never caused strain to my neck, even whilst riding a sports-bike.

The big plus point for me was how easy it was to switch visors on the Aeron. The helmet came with a clear visor in situ, but also in the box was a silver iridium visor 'for track use': yeah, right! There's no internal sun visor but swapping visors is the simplest and quickest I have come across: push down the black levers and the visor comes free! Done in seconds. Peripheral vision is also good.

Ventilation is excellent, the simple open/close chin vent allowing for plenty of airflow. The Aeron's top-mounted and brow inlets are also effective. And if you wear glasses, Shark's 'Easy-Fit' system allows for that.

So, any downsides? I'm not sure you'd want to wear this on a long tour, but as a stylish helmet for everyday use it's hard to beat. If there's one other negative, It ain't cheap…

However, it's a superb helmet, comes in a range of fantastic colours – this is the 'Edgy' in carbon/red/chrome – and in sizes XS-XXL. Shop around as you could find one from between £550-£608. But go with a trustworthy vendor!

Mike Cowton

https://www.nevis.uk.com/products/shark

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T.B.C.
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stratfordautojumble.co.uk

AUTOJUMBLE.INFO

JOIN THE ROTARY CLUB!

While they were much maligned on launch, you can't knock the rarity of the Norton F1 rotary.

This beauty is offered at the NEC Classic Motor Show by Iconic Auctioneers and goes under the hammer on Sunday November 9. It's rarer than rare because this machine has delivery mileage only. Unused, unregistered and with only 57 miles on the clock, this is one of just 140 such beasts manufactured.

The bikes were effectively a homage to the-then rotary Norton RCW588 machines being raced on British tracks to great success by names such as Steve Spray, Trevor Nation, Jim Moodie and Ian Simpson. This particular Shenstone-built road machine was bought in 1990 and never used or registered. Power for the 588cc twin-rotor Wankel rotary was around 95bhp, matched to a Spondon frame and WP front and rear suspension. With such provenance and rarity, Iconic Auctioneers reckon this bike – which won a Highly Commended at the 2014 Stafford Show – should go for between £30,000-£40,000. It comes with three keys, tool kit, handbooks and that Stafford Show rosette!

Mark Bryan, motorcycle manager at Iconic Auctioneers, said: "The Norton F1 Rotary is one of the most significant British superbikes of its era. To be able to offer one in delivery mileage, unused condition is something truly special. For collectors and enthusiasts alike, it represents a once-in-a-generation chance to secure a piece of motorcycling history." For more go to: **www.iconicauctioneers.com**.

KICKBACK AT SAMMY'S

The Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum again played host to Kickback in September – a one-day invitational showcase celebrating the very best in custom engineering, retro mods, classics and race bikes.

It proved to be a busy day, with the 500-plus classic gems on display in the museum being joined by over 400 bikes visiting for the day as well as the 100 customs and specials motorcycles that were brought for the display.

This year's showcase coincided with the launch of Kickback magazine, a new quarterly publication dedicated to custom culture. For more information about upcoming events, visit: **www.sammymiller.co.uk**

Pics courtesy of Chris Mabey.

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A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BUYING A BIKE AT AUCTION

Thinking of raising your hand at a classic bike auction? Mark Bryan, motorcycle manager at Iconic Auctioneers, shares his essential advice for first-time buyers.

ICONIC
LOT 449
EXPERTS IN EXCEPTIONAL CARS • MOTORCYCLES • AUTOMOBILIA

Whatever your experience, buying a bike from a motorcycle auction can be incredibly rewarding.

It's been great to speak to many first-timers at our motorcycle auctions and I'm always happy to answer any questions they have when it comes to the auction process in general.

Here are a few recurring themes in the conversations I'm having, tips, if you will.

View the bike before the auction

The best advice I can give is to attend one of our preview sessions, usually held the day before or on the morning of the sale. Seeing the bike in person lets you check the numbers, turn the engine over on the kick-start if it's an older machine, and get a feel for its condition.

Equally important is the paperwork. A 1950s or 60s bike ideally should come with receipts, MoTs and logbooks. A solitary V5C often suggests a thin history. For newer bikes the provenance may be simpler, but still worth reviewing.

Check the maintenance history

Not all motorcycles demand the same paperwork. Older machines from the 20s through to the 60s usually will have been restored at some stage. In these cases, photographs or receipts are the most useful kind of documentation.

With later bikes, history becomes critical. Ducatis from the 90s onwards are a good example: their belt-driven cams mean service records are essential, as neglected belts can cause costly damage. On bikes from the 70s, 80s and 90s, mileage is also important, and MoTs should support the odometer reading. Records only became digital in the mid-2000s, so earlier bikes rely on paper evidence.

Do some basic preparation

Before the auction, set a budget and stick to it. Remember the buyer's premium is added to the hammer price, and payment is due the next working day. It's easy to get carried away once the bidding starts, so having a limit helps.

Check the auction location and timings beforehand. And don't forget your ID – whether bidding in person, online or by phone, you'll need a driving licence or passport to register.

Buy the bike to enjoy it

A frequent question is whether certain bikes make good investments. My answer is always the same: buy a bike because you want to ride it, restore it or admire it. Prices rise and fall. Some buyers who paid £80,000 for a Vincent Black Shadow a decade ago now see them worth half that. If you buy something you love, the value is secondary.

Go with your gut

Sometimes instinct is the best guide. If you see a bike and it feels right, others are likely to think the same. If it doesn't sit well with you, trust that instinct, too.

Buying at auction should be exciting and enjoyable. The key is to ask questions, set a budget, and choose a bike that makes you smile every time you see it.

Iconic Auctioneers' next Iconic Motorcycle Sale will be held at the NEC Classic Motor Show on Sunday, 9 November. To find out more go to **www.iconicauctioneers.com**

34 PAGES OF PRACTICAL ADVICE INSIDE!
classic motorcycle mechanics
TRIPLE TREAT!
ROBO-FLOP?

PRE-ORDER YOUR CMM

Want the next issue of *CMM*? Of course you do! Then it's simple. Subscribing is best but, failing that, why not pre-order? Simply scan the fuzzy circular thing with your smartphone (c'mon, we've all got one) and off you pop! Alternatively, if you like what you see coming up in the next issue (see page 97 for more) then go to: **www.classicmagazines.co.uk/issue/preorder** where you can pre-order all of Kelsey's wonderful magazines. Even ones about trains, cars or towpaths…

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MALCOLM WHEELER – OBITUARY

Classic Motorcycle Mechanics is sad to report that former Classic Racer editor, Malc Wheeler, passed away on 10 September, aged 77.

Malc started out in the motorcycle industry back in 1976 as a salesman for Freddie Frith Ltd. in Grimsby. He'd eventually work at Ducati importers Moto Cinelli and also have a long career in racing.

Malc developed a love both for his local circuit Cadwell Park and the Isle of Man TT course, first going to the Island in 1974. Eventually, he would take three podium finishes at the TT, in 1979 (third) and two second places in 1986 and 1987. His last TT appearance would come in 1990. In 2013 he also became President of the TT Riders' Association.

His publishing career with Mortons Media Group began in 1994 when he took the helm of Old Bike Mart. Malc then helped Mortons as they acquired titles such as The Classic MotorCycle, Classic Motorcycle Mechanics, Classic Racer and Classic Bike Guide, along with the two highly popular Stafford classic shows and the Bristol Classic Motorcycle show.

Malc married his love of events and racing by getting some big names to the CMM show, such as Eddie Lawson, Wayne Rainey and Christian Sarron.

Retirement came in 2016 when Malc left Mortons, meaning he could spend more time with wife Julie.

Everyone at CMM would like to express their condolences to Malc's family and many friends.

KWAK COLOURS!

We enjoyed riding the Kawasaki Z650RS retro a while back, not long after launch in 2022 – now here are the 2026 colours.

Modelled on the original Z650-B1 of 1976, the retro has a twin-cylinder, not a four-cylinder motor, but power output is roughly the same. And at least you've got the safety of ABS and two-mode traction control.

The 2026 colours are: Ebony, Metallic Ocean Blue and Emerald Green. We know which one looks best: the 'original' green. Available from November, the 2026 Z650RS is priced at £7899: **https://www.kawasaki.co.uk**

selected events

OCTOBER

15 **NOVEMBER ISSUE OF CMM ON SALE**

16 **NOVEMBER/DECEMBER CLASSIC RACER ON SALE**

17 **Bike Night**
The Bike Sanctuary, The Old Woodyard, Forest Road, Hanslope, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK197DE:
www.bikesanctuary.co.uk

18 **Scorton Auto/Bike Jumble**
North Yorkshire Events Centre, Atley Hill Road, Scorton, Richmond, North Yorks DL10 6EJ

18 **Spur Gear Car and Bike Breakfast Meet**
The Spur Inn, London Road, Slindon Common, Arundel, West Sussex BN18 ONE:
www.thespurslindon.co.uk

19 **'Normous Newark Motorcycle Autojumble**
Newark Showground, Lincoln Rd, Coddington, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG24 2NY:
www.newarkautojumble.co.uk

25 **Kempton Park Motorcycle Jumble**
Kempton Park Racecourse, Staines Road East, Sunbury-on-Thames, Surrey TW16 5AQ:
www.kemptonautojumble.co.uk

26 **South of England Classic Show and Bike Jumble**
South of England Showground, Ardingly, Surrey RH17 6TL:
www.elkpromotions.co.uk

26 **Huddersfield Autojumble**
The Old Market Building, Brook Street, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire HD1 1RG:
www.phoenixfairs.jimdo.com

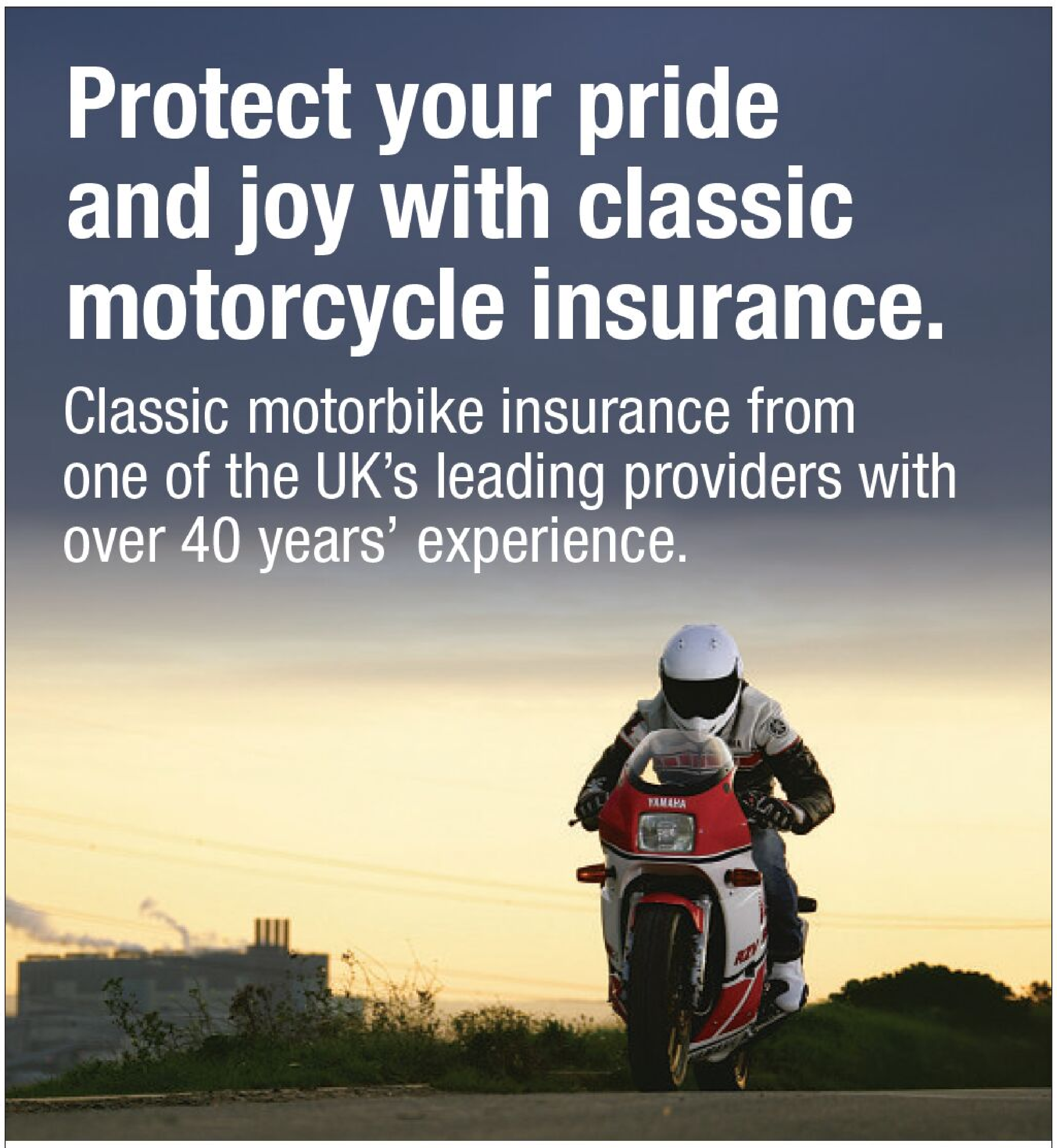
29 **NOVEMBER ISSUE OF CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE ON SALE**

NOVEMBER

1 **Rufforth Autojumble**
Rufforth Park, Wetherby Road, Rufforth, North Yorks YO23 3QH:
www.rufforthautojumble.com

9 **Mere Brow Autojumble**
The Leisure Lakes, The Gravel, Mere Brow, Tarleton, Preston, Lancashire PR4 6JX:
www.merebrowautojumble.co.uk

15 **Scorton Auto/Bike Jumble**
North Yorkshire Events Centre, Atley Hill Road, Scorton, Richmond, N. Yorks DL10 6EJ



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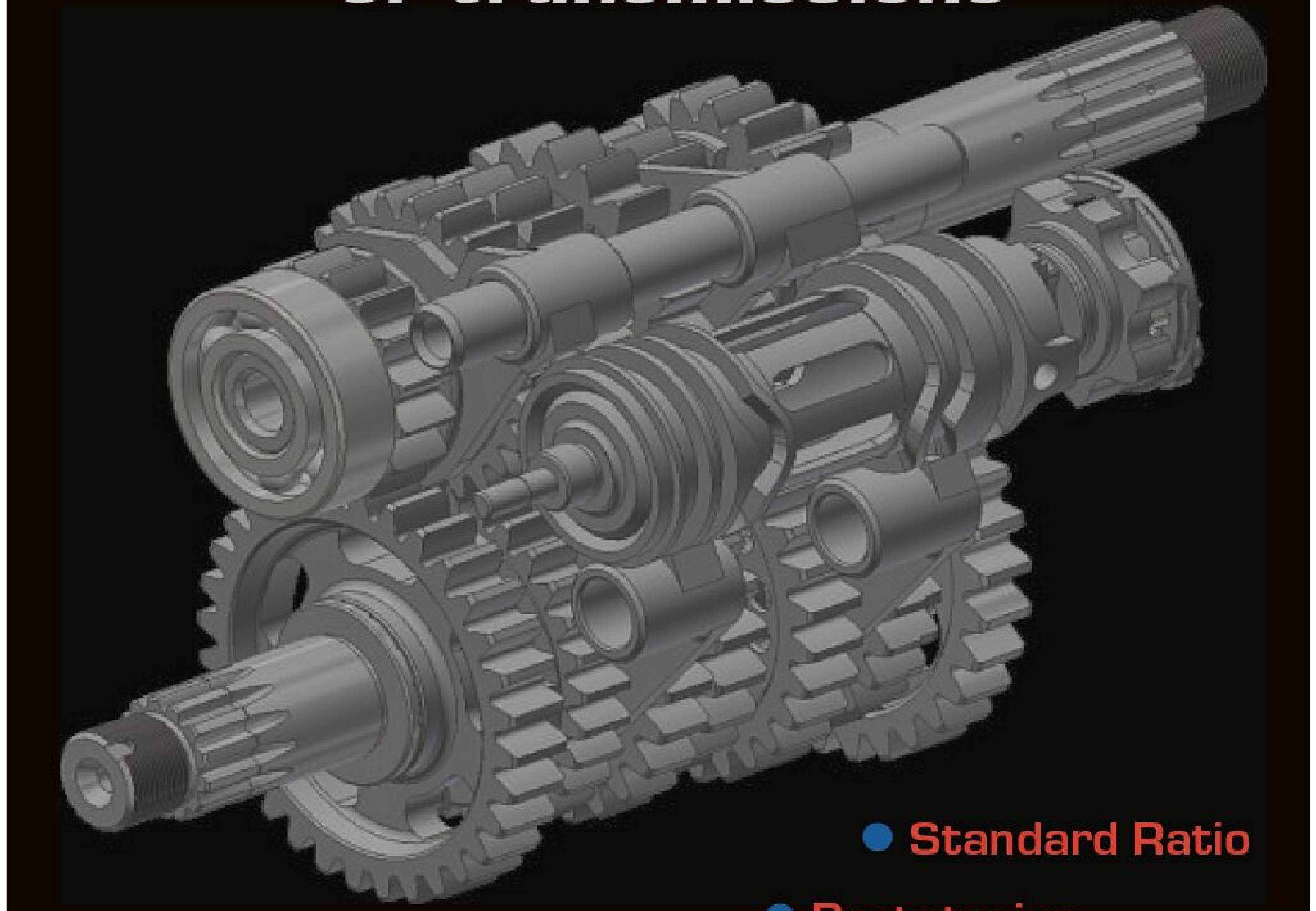

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The best will win one of our lovely T-shirts!

Super Scooper!

Star Letter

One of the most interesting sections of CMM is when Steve Cooper is creating a special; this is of special interest to me as I am also an incurable builder of motorcycles!

A couple of points. Steve admits he cannot weld, so maybe it's time the old dog learned new tricks? There is a very helpful company in Tewkesbury called R-Tech Welding. They supply superb equipment with a wide range of single phase units which are ideal for the home workshop. This is also supported with training and after-sales. Maybe you could get Steve to learn MIG and TIG welding. The TIG is superb for aluminium repairs so this would benefit Steve and also I am sure would make for an interesting topic.

Also, I have mentioned before: electrics. Many people struggle in this area so a basic feature on wiring also would be a good topic.

The magazine is superb and I realise your readership is a broad church and as such must cover lots of interests. The very fact you are moving with the times and including what some would call modern machines... Well, I think we forget the 1990s were 35 years ago.

Duncan Rhoades

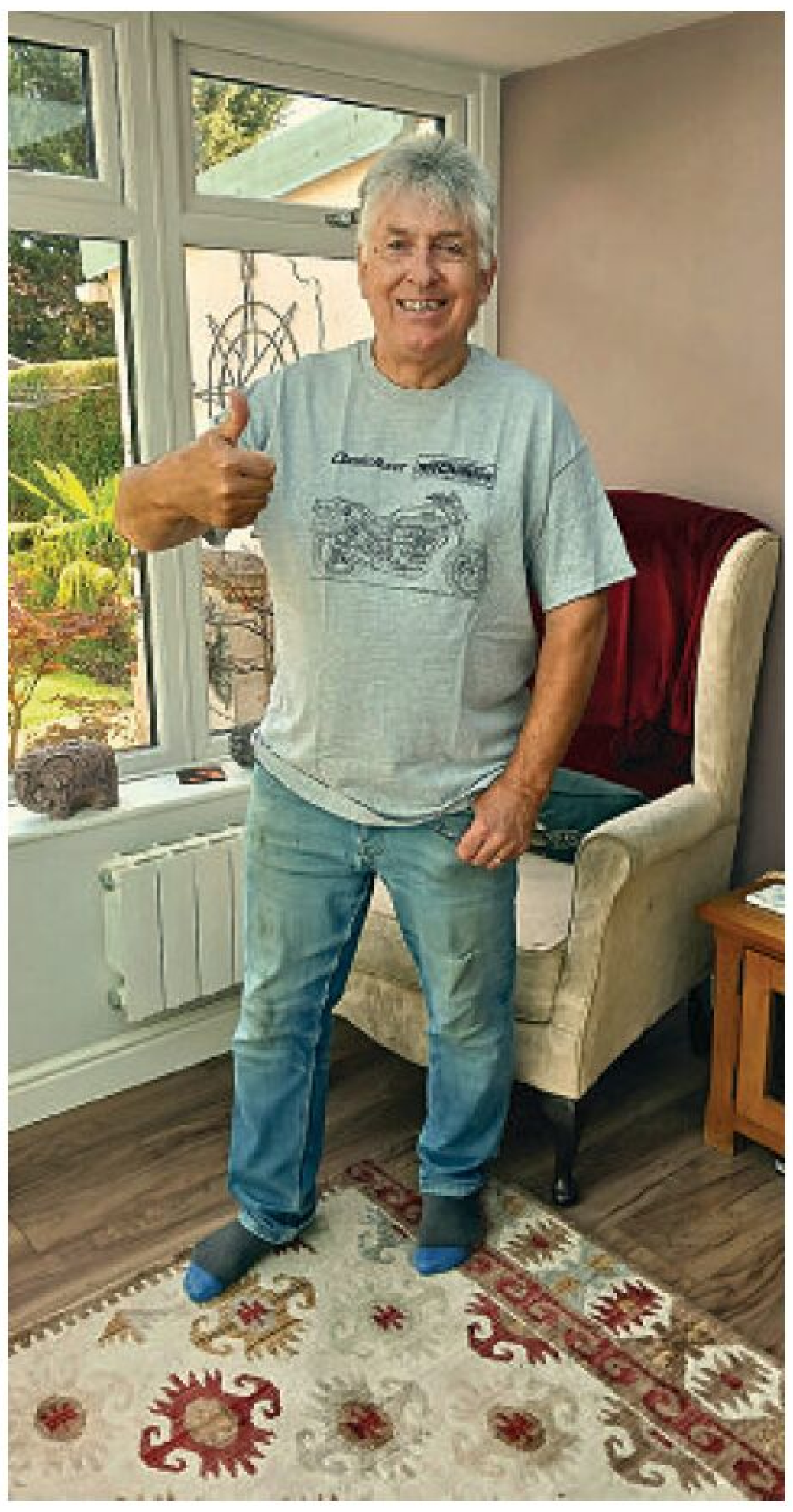
Bertie says: *"Thanks for this Duncan. We love Scoop's (ahem) sometimes crazy projects. More power to him. I'm happy to bring any 'how to weld' features in the magazine should Steve or any of our contributors wish to take that on. As to electrics, we did 'almost' have legendary lecky man Ferret on board for a regular column, but he's so busy he couldn't do it… Maybe we should try him again."*

Suits me to a tee!

Dear all at CMM. I was a recent lucky winner of a T-shirt for my words in 'The Way We Were'. My T-shirt has arrived and I'm very pleased with it – fits a treat, thank you! I was so pleased with it that, when it arrived, I walked around for an hour in just my underpants and the t-shirt. Nothing else! Sadly, I'm banned from my local Sainsbury's now. Gawd bless ya!

Tim Jones

Bertie says: *"Looks like you could do with some slippers, Tim?"*



Zed head!

I read with much interest Steve's report on the Yamaha. In the text he mentioned other bikes of similar style and capacity but missed the biggest lemon in the bowl: the Kawasaki Z/KZ400 twin, a 360-degree, single OHC twin with a modest 35bhp and sporting twin balancer shafts to help smooth things out.

I have owned several bikes up and down the size chart from 100cc to 1200cc and never really settled on one to really gel with, ending up with a Z200 which, although a nice little bike, was not really big enough for what I needed. So, not knowing such a thing existed, up it popped and knowing nothing about them and a habit of impulse buying, home it came.

Silly money, but in what seems to be pretty genuine condition and I love it as it is easy to ride, light enough for my 76-year-old knees and it really looks the part. Also, it starts every time and has enough grunt to get me along nicely. This bike ticks all the modest boxes for me and has cured me of twitchy fingeritus! I hope you like it. PS. I really like the Bay-Watch part of the magazine.

Colin Halls

Bertie says: *"Colin – that is a very nice Zed you have there. Good to hear you're still 'at it' at 76. And glad you like Bay-Watch."*

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
SEE PAGE 52 FOR DETAILS

Oh cam-on!

I've never had cause to write in before, but Mark Haycock's latest 400/4 project feature (Part 5) where he splits an endless cam-chain in order to get it to fit.

Erm, really? Tell him to slip the cam-chain on to the end of the camshaft and then the cam sprocket (separate to one another), and then to wiggle the shaft through. Once the camshaft is in place, then mount the chain on to the sprocket and lift the sprocket/chain into place on the camshaft.

I've had 45 years of 400/4 ownership and more than 250,000 miles ridden on them (two of them still owned with well over 100,000 miles each now), hence cam-chain replacement has been done a 'few' times now without ever needing to split the chain. Honda supplied the cam-chain as an endless unit for a reason. Keep up the good work!

Chris Rushton

Bertie says: *"Thanks for this Chris!"*

Parting memories!

Reading Ralph Ferrand's article on turning and parting off in the lathe, it brought back fond memories as you get when you're aged 78!

I've had my Myford ML 10 for over 20 years but always shied away from 'parting off' as in a small lathe it can be a bit daunting. Recently I purchased a quick-release tool post holder kit off the web for £30. In the set it came with a parting off mounting with no blade.

By not having much success with conventional blades (not cheap), it got me thinking of my apprenticeship with my father and grandfather in an engineering workshop in a mill in Oldham. I spent many hours sat on a stool watching them work.

I remembered my grandfather Joe (another Fred Dibnah type) making a holder to hold cut-down machine saw blades, ground to shape for the large 12-inch lathes we had in the workshop. Remembering this, I cut down my own blades. As a result, I have to say I've had more success parting off aluminium, brass and stainless steel. They tend to flex without breaking if you feed it in too fast. The blades I cut down (in the photo) were my dad's from the 1970s. Also, they make great scrapes. As I said, 'Parting memories!'

Colin Rider

Bertie says: *"That's a lovely story Colin. Apologies that we had to shorten it a little."*

Super CBR

Nice to see (finally) the Honda CBR600RR test in CMM. I was lucky enough to own three: two as road bikes and one as a track-day machine.

What I liked about them was the unquestioned Honda reliability. Apart from general wear and tear and keeping on top of the consumables, all three bikes were brilliant. On the track bike (2003 right-way-up forks) it was amazing what you could get away with out there on track and how many 'big bike scalps' you could collect. With me doing only UK tracks, most seemed to suit a 600 anyways.

Maybe more stuff on track-days and track-daying and what can pass for a 'modern classic' these days? Even though I stick to the roads now, I still love reading about heading out on track.

Bill Peterson

Bertie says: *"I'm the same Bill! Used to love going out on track but happy to watch my mates do it now!"*

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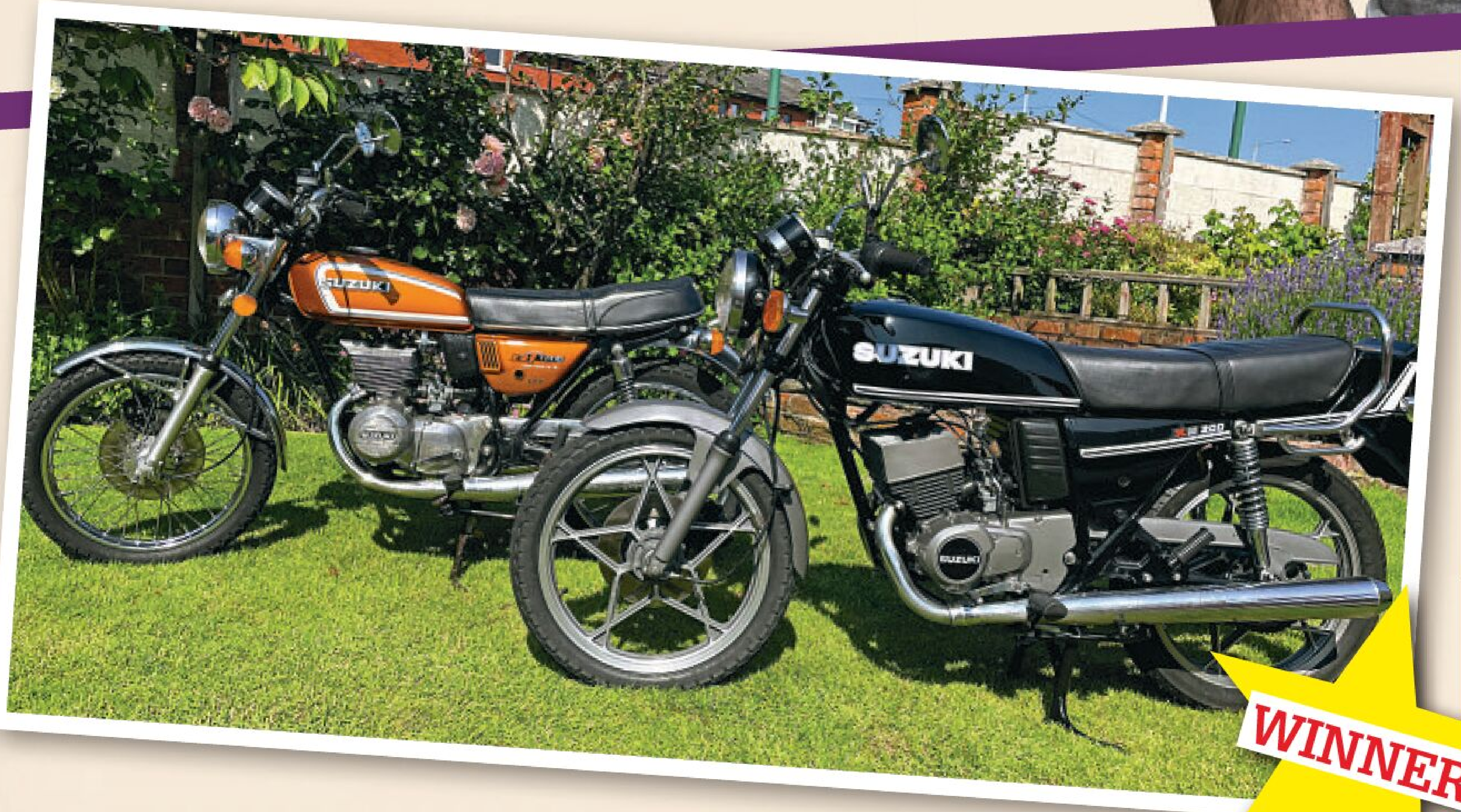


WINNER

ALAN JACKSON'S COLLECTION

I thought I would email you a photo of a couple of my bikes. As you can probably guess, my main interest is small air-cooled two-strokes. The black bike is a 1979 Suzuki GT200 X5 and the orange one is a 1974 Suzuki GT185. The black bike has been subject to a nut and bolt restoration, with all work apart from the powder-coated frame done by myself. The orange bike is an American import bought as a non-runner with crash damage. From the tax sticker on the number plate it was last on the road in 1988.

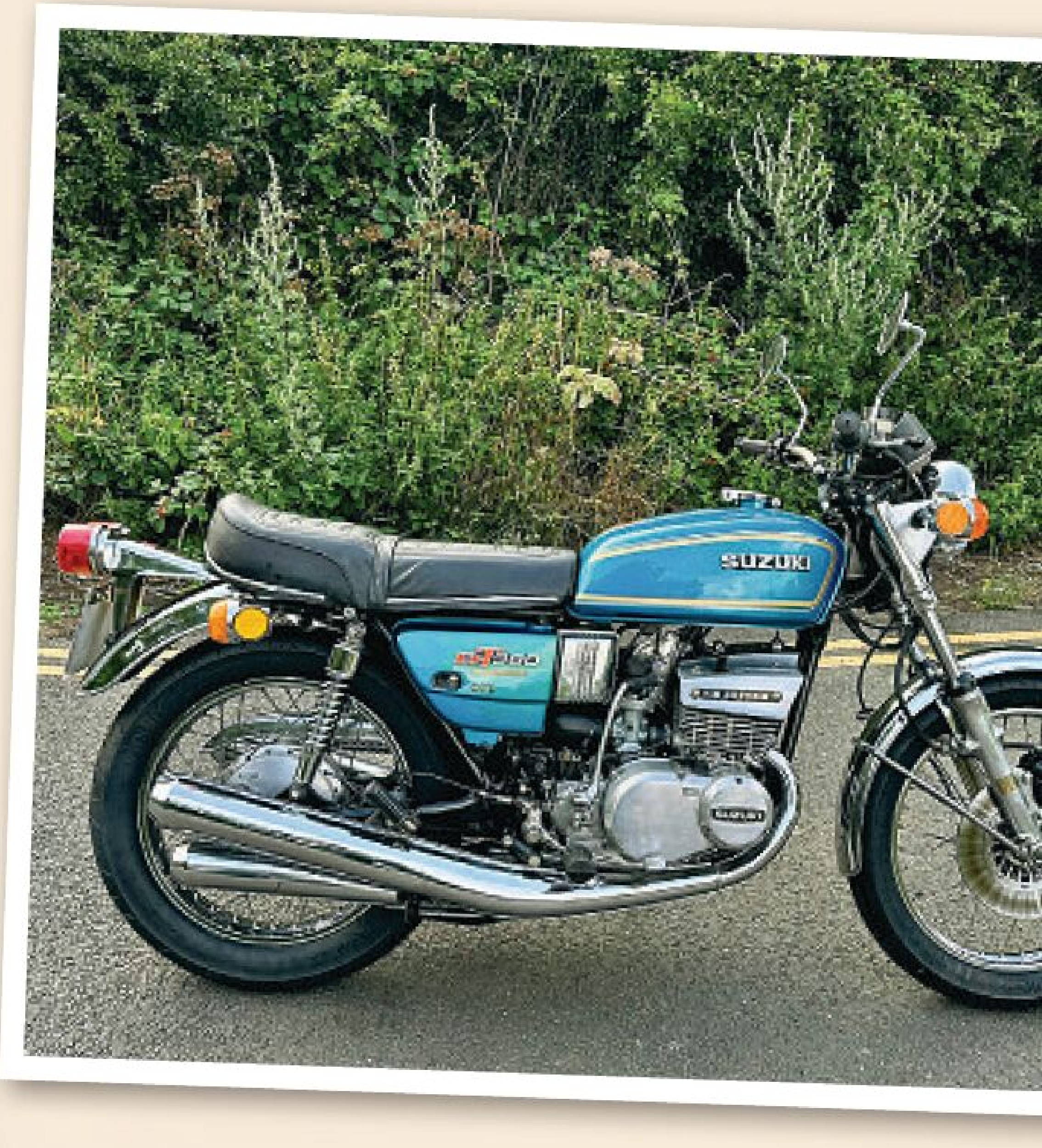
The bike is mainly original, the only new/ replacement parts (apart from consumables and perishables) being a new rear mudguard and master cylinder. It has been subject to an 'oily rag restoration' with, again, all work done by myself. Apart from getting it running correctly and repairing the crash damage, only damaged/broken parts and bearings, hoses, seals, cables and brake pads/ shoes have been replaced.

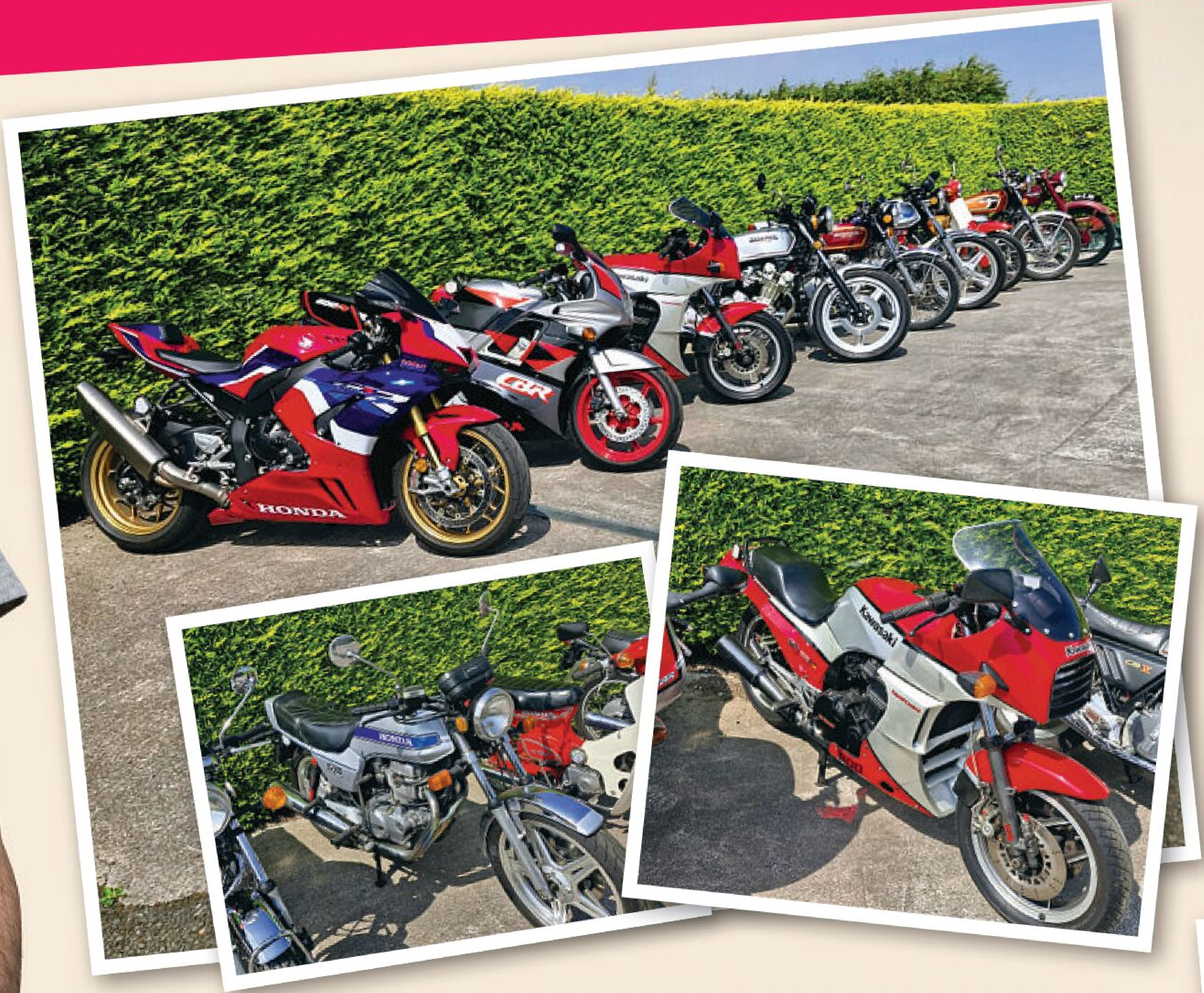
I have tried to retain as much of the originality as possible including the original paint on all the parts as it was too good to be fully restored.

My other bikes are a 1970 BSA Bantam B175 and a 1979 Suzuki SB200.

DALE BARRON'S SUZUKI GT380

I wanted to share a few pics of my 1976 GT380. This has been in the family since new. However, it has been kept in storage for 42 years having only clocked 3000 miles! I wanted to get it back on the road this year. It's needed a bit of work, including a full crank rebuild and cylinders rebored, along with many other bits and pieces. Now it's back on the road, it's a cracking bike!





STEVE O'CONNOR'S COLLECTION

Here's my collection of some of my bikes that has taken me over 30 years to collect, with my last purchase being the 1979 Honda CBX1000, a 1977 Honda CB400 Four: these are the two bikes that I've dreamed of having since my early teens!

The modern SP Fireblade is new and that's my daily ride, but I enjoy riding all of them, weather permitting! The collection consists of a: 2023 Honda CBR1000RR-R Fireblade SP; 1993 Honda CBR 600 F2; 1985 Kawasaki GPZ 900; 1979 Honda CBX 1000; 1977 Honda CB400 Four; 1979 Honda CB250 N Super Dream; 1983 Honda C50; 1976 Honda CB360; and 1954 Ariel NH350 Red Hunter.

STEVE MURRAY'S SUZUKI GS1000

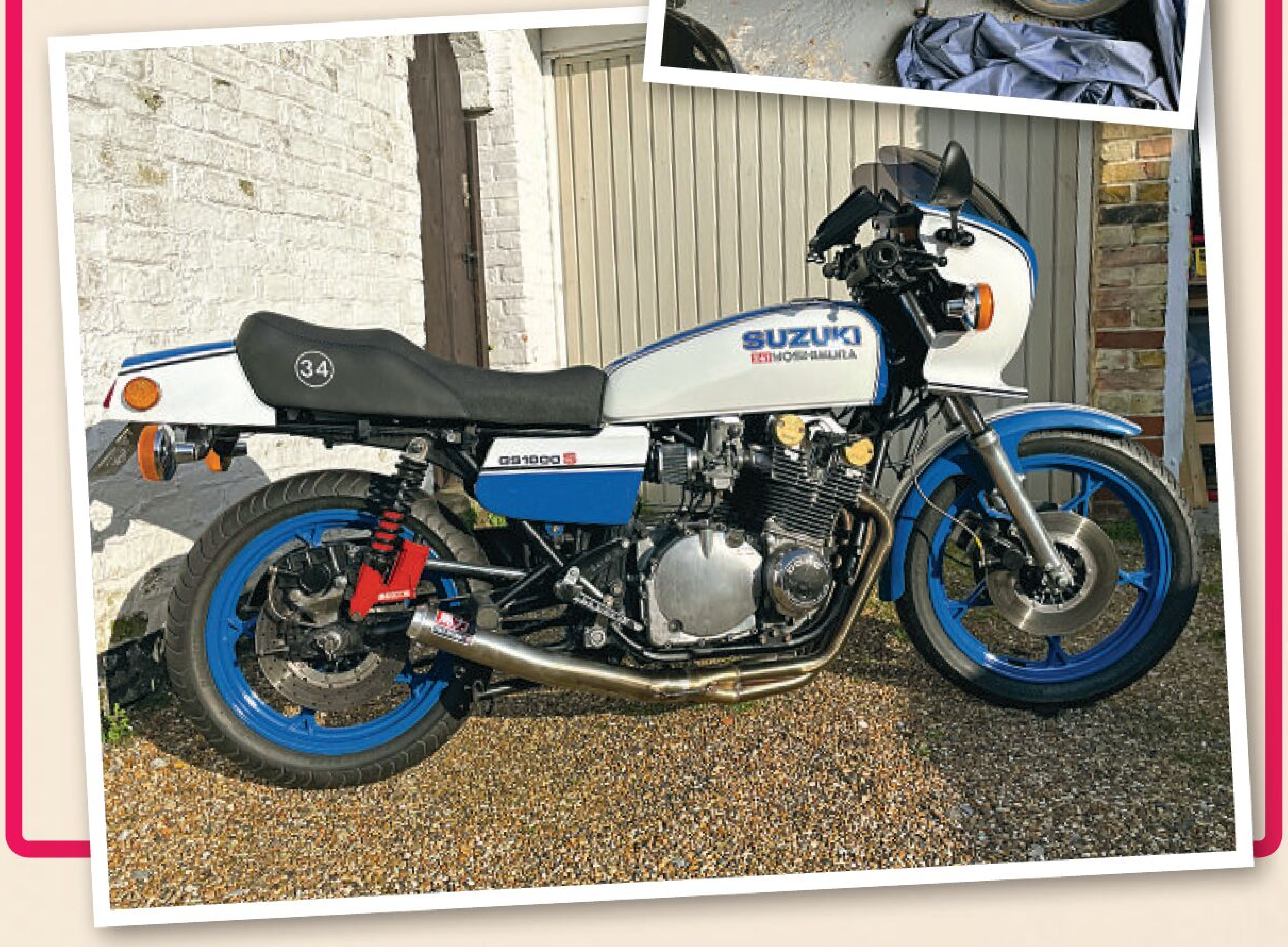
I wanted to share with you and your readers the work done to my Suzuki GS1000.

I bought her in 1984 when I was 21 years old and she was five years old. I used her for about 10 years and then it just became an object that I transported around with me but didn't use.

Three years ago I decided to get back on my bike and the restoration started. Zen Motorcycles in Folkestone got her roadworthy again: electronic ignition; tyres; carbs rebuilt; battery; brakes; fork tubes; springs and steering damper.

My plan was to turn her into a Wes Cooley replica, so I found a firm called MotoGPWerks in Anaheim, California, who had the rights to make Yoshimura exhausts to the original design, and I got a fender eliminator to tidy up the back-end, along with a proper GS1000 front fairing and some mirrors from Holland.

Road Star Cycles in Dover fitted the exhaust for me. Viking Motorcycle Seats recovered the seat and stitched Wes Cooley's number 34 into the side. The last job was the paintwork which Jimmy Lockhart near Canterbury did for me and all I had to was put it all back together, and here she is back on the road again at 46-years-old and I'm back at 60-years-old! Loving every turn of the wheel!



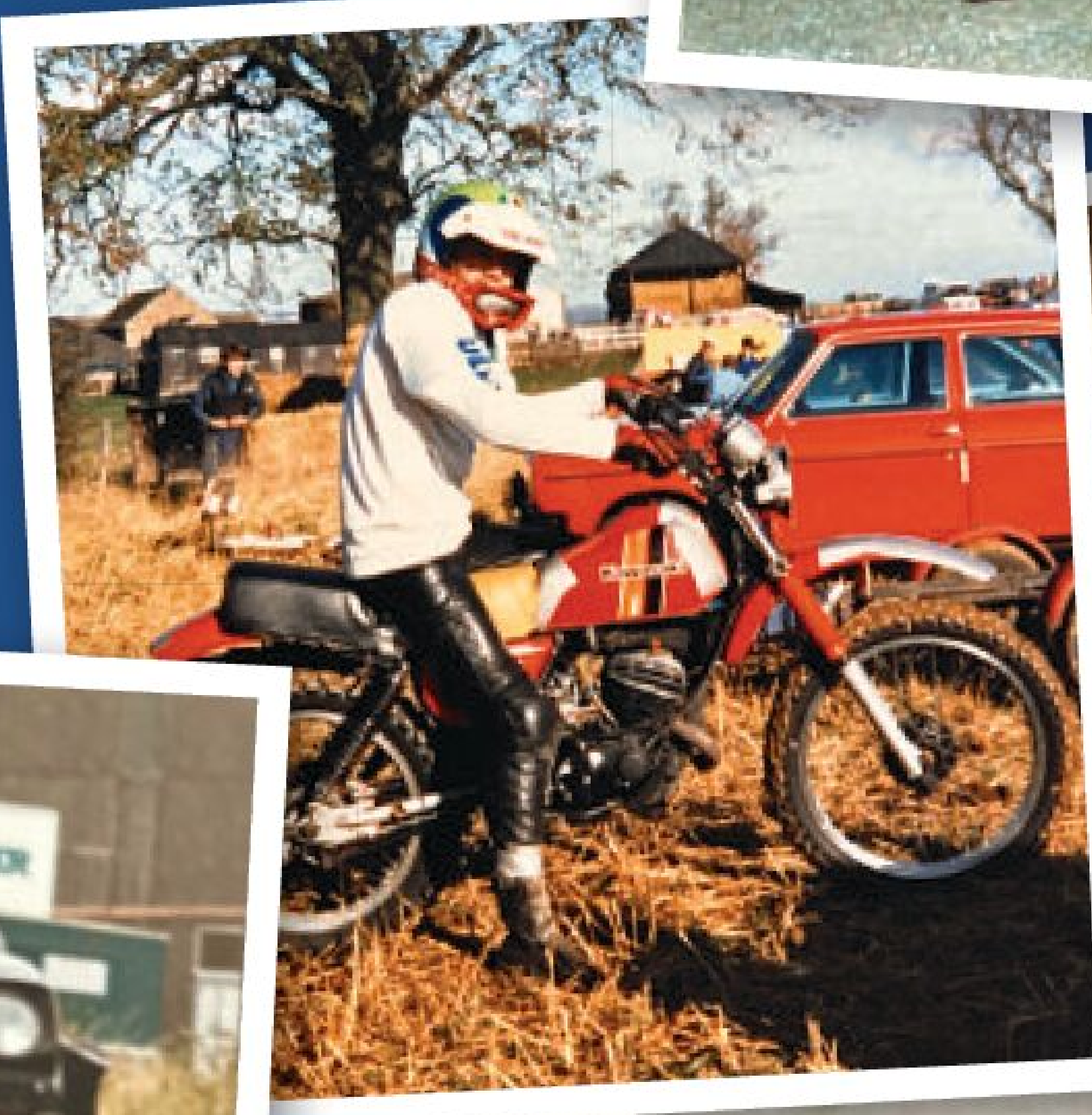
GARY FLATMAN'S COLLECTION

These are two of my bikes. A 2021 Royal Enfield Meteor 350 which I bought new after following them when they first came out in India a year before. Also pictured is my 1965 BSA Bantam that I bought earlier this year and which I am just going to run as-is without any major restoration other than an oily rag. Mechanically it's very good!

The way we were...

Send us your nostalgic snaps of you back in the day with your steed! Either send to me at bsimmonds@mortons.co.uk or via our vibrant Facebook page. C'mon, we'll send you a T-shirt if you are our first pick!

Ian Todhunter says: "Hi folks! Here are some of my early bikes from 1981-1991. I'm still riding, of course, and just sold the heavily modded GSX-R1100K I'd owned since 1999. So, the list includes a Suzuki GSX250 (my first new bike); the ubiquitous teen dream Yamaha RD250LC; a modded Honda CB900FZ; a 1988 'jellymould' Honda CBR600 that I raced. What else was there... Oh yes, a Honda CB250RS winter hack which I loved! Then a 1991 Honda CBR600 at the 1991 Manx GP. Then there's me and a mate hooning on air-cooled Zeds circa 1983. Also, a heavily modded 1980 Z750E with Uni-track back-end at the Isle of Man TT (it started life exactly the same as bike in front!). Also I had a hyper-reliable 1986 VFR750. Oh, and the same Z750 at Elvington with scant regard to safety clothing in a 1980s style! Ha! Then there's a 1979 KE175 grass-tracking! Also, a 1954 Norton and sidecar with my cosmetically-altered Z. This was the result of one of my many spills wearing said poor clothing, and finally the GSX-R1100 mentioned earlier. I'm still riding at 60 on a KTM Duke 890R and searching for an age-appropriate CB77 circa 1964."



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ICONIC AUCTIONEERS

Honda's CB400 Four is arguably the most popular classic Japanese motorcycle out there today.

From when it first appeared at the Cologne Show in September 1974, its sporty styling matched with four-cylinder urge, the bike has been a favourite among restorers, who even after 50 years find that parts are still generally available, making a project a satisfying prospect.

Right from the start, after collecting the first test bike for the weekly paper Motor Cycle early in February 1975, I felt it was a winner. I was hugely impressed by its combination of smoothness and lively performance that recalled the heady days of Honda's world-championship winning streak in all classes in the 1960s.

Editor of the paper Peter Kelly was so excited by the bike that he hatched a plan to enter a team in the 1975 Isle of Man TT production race. And over the following two years the garlands kept coming, along with accolades as the Machine of the Year. It even won a world championship on the Isle of Man.

The launch of the CB400 Four, alongside the huge flat-four Gold Wing tourer, marked a significant change at Honda after a period when it had been concentrating on cars. Although the ➔

HONDA
SUPER SPORT
400FOUR

HALF-CENTURY HONDA!

It's just over 50 years since Honda's CB400 Four was launched. John Nutting, who tested the first bike in the UK, recalls the highlights of what has become a cult classic.

WORDS: **JOHN NUTTING** PICS: **GARY CHAPMAN, JOHN NUTTING, MORTONS ARCHIVE**

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CB750 Four's appearance in 1968 stunned the world, the bike's subsequent versions, along with the smaller CB500 Four, had evolved into refined, but benign, machines with gentlemanly manners. Its smaller twins also were chips off the old 'You meet the nicest people on a Honda' block.

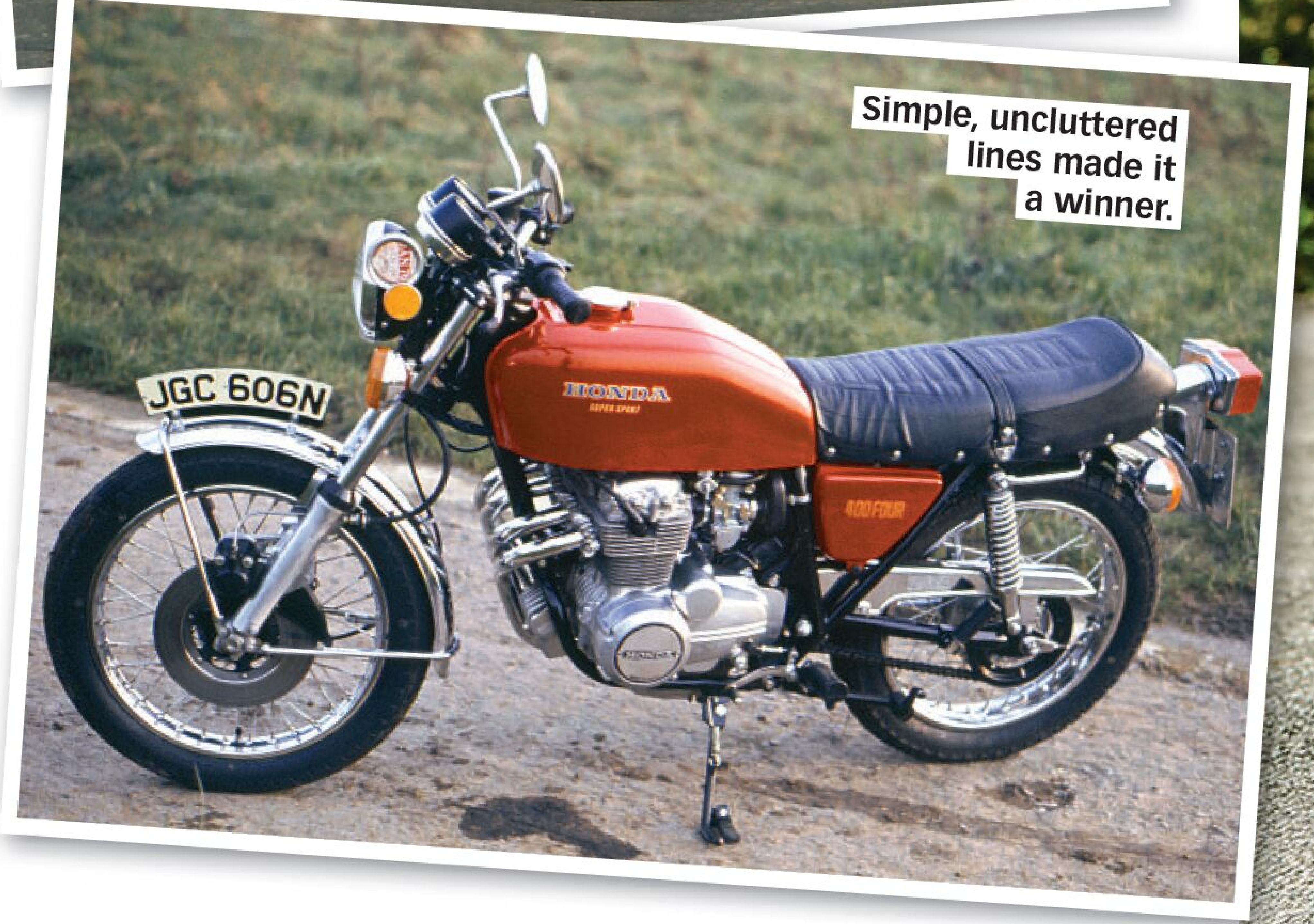
The changes had come from the top, after the factory's president Soichiro Honda, its founder and architect, retired in 1973 to become 'supreme advisor'. New management arrived along with younger designers. But the CB400 Four wasn't a completely new design. In 1972, the old regime had launched a smaller four-cylinder 350cc model alongside the CB500 Four, but it was dogged by its conservative looks and modest performance that was barely on a par with the CB350 twin.

Taking the CB350 Four as the basis, the new designers opened up the capacity from 347cc (47x50mm) to 51x50mm and what appeared to be a peculiar figure of 408cc, added a sixth ratio to the gearbox, beefed up the clutch, and cloaked the frame with a larger slab-sided fuel tank and almost racy seat with rivets down the side. But what caught the eye of the onlookers at Cologne was the beautiful chrome-plated four-into-one exhaust snaking down the right-hand side. It was the bike's signature component.

Gerald Davison, who, in 1974, was senior manager at Honda UK and had taken on responsibility for product development, recalls the introduction of the CB400 Four. "At that time Honda Motorcycle R&D in Asaka did not really consult much on what we wanted – some of the key engineers/designers periodically would visit individual markets and ask questions, meet

➔

Nutters on the original CB400 Four test bike.



Simple, uncluttered lines made it a winner.

The original CB400 Four test bike lives on!

The CB400 Four that was featured in the first test report in March 1975 still exists. A US-market model made at the factory in October 1974, it was registered JGC 606N on 15 February, 1975 by Honda UK.

After the bike's life as a demo machine (see above) it was acquired by TT Leathers, the motorcycle clothing company, followed by six other owners. Chris Rushton, who has collected and restored many SOHC four-cylinder Hondas since his first CB400 Four in 1978, and now owns the bike, takes up the story: "The registration number was recognised by serial Honda collector, the late Dave Ayesthorpe, who had the foresight to purchase it despite its poor condition and stored it as found for the next 20 or so years," says Chris, who had first met Dave and his wife Gill on the Isle of Man in 1987.

He adds: "Dave eventually did commence JGC's restoration and had done all the hard work, but he never quite got to finish the job." Dave died about 10 years ago so Chris bought the bike from Gill and had the red paintwork completed along with the remaining assembly tasks. That was in the late summer of 2024, since when Chris has covered just 20 miles on JGC, the first time it has been run since 1983.

But then 65-year-old retired mechanical engineer Chris has many other Hondas to ride. He still has that first CB400 Four bought at the age of 18 on which he commuted over the years and has covered more than 250,000 miles. Another CB400 Four was bought two years later and used regularly, covering 108,000 miles up to 1993 when it was restored well enough in 1998 to win Best in Show at Stafford the following year.

Yet another CB400 Four arrived in 1994 and was used for commuting, having now covered more than 120,000 miles and still has its original pistons, rings, crank and shells. Other CB400 Fours are also in the family, some of which are used by Chris' wife.

A CB400 Four is still a great ride in 2025.

Clear clocks.

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●PRESERVE NATURE
●ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET
●THINK SAFETY
SOUVENEZ-VOUS
●PRESERVEZ LA NATURE
●PORTEZ TOUJOURS VOTRE CASQUE
●PENSEZ A
ACHTUNG
●SCHUETZE DEIN LEBEN
●DENKE AN DEINE SICHERHEIT
●FAHRE NUR MIT SCHUTZHELM

Classic tank filler.

Badge of a legend.

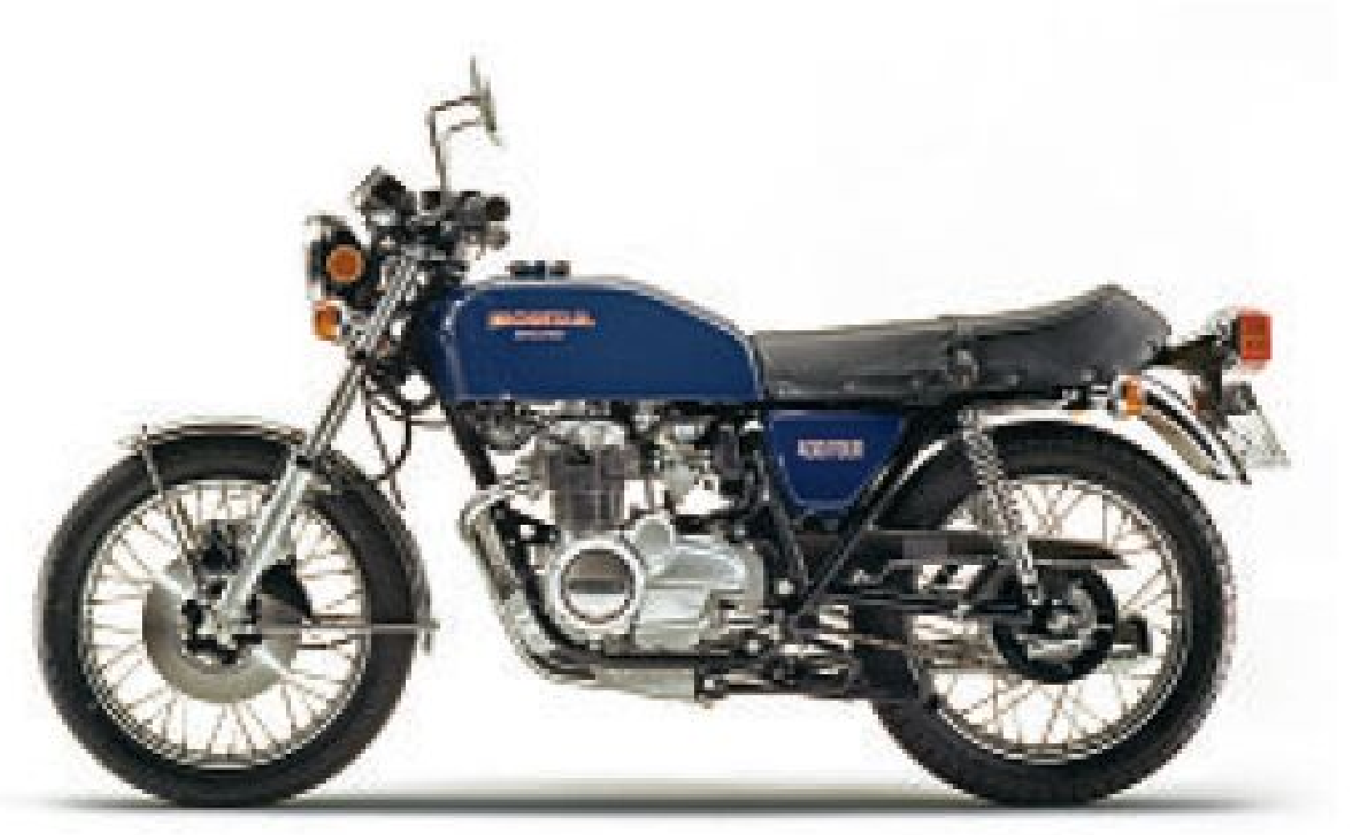
THE HONDA CB400 FOUR YEAR BY YEAR

1972

CB350 Four launched in US and Europe.

1974

CB400F launched in September at Cologne Show.

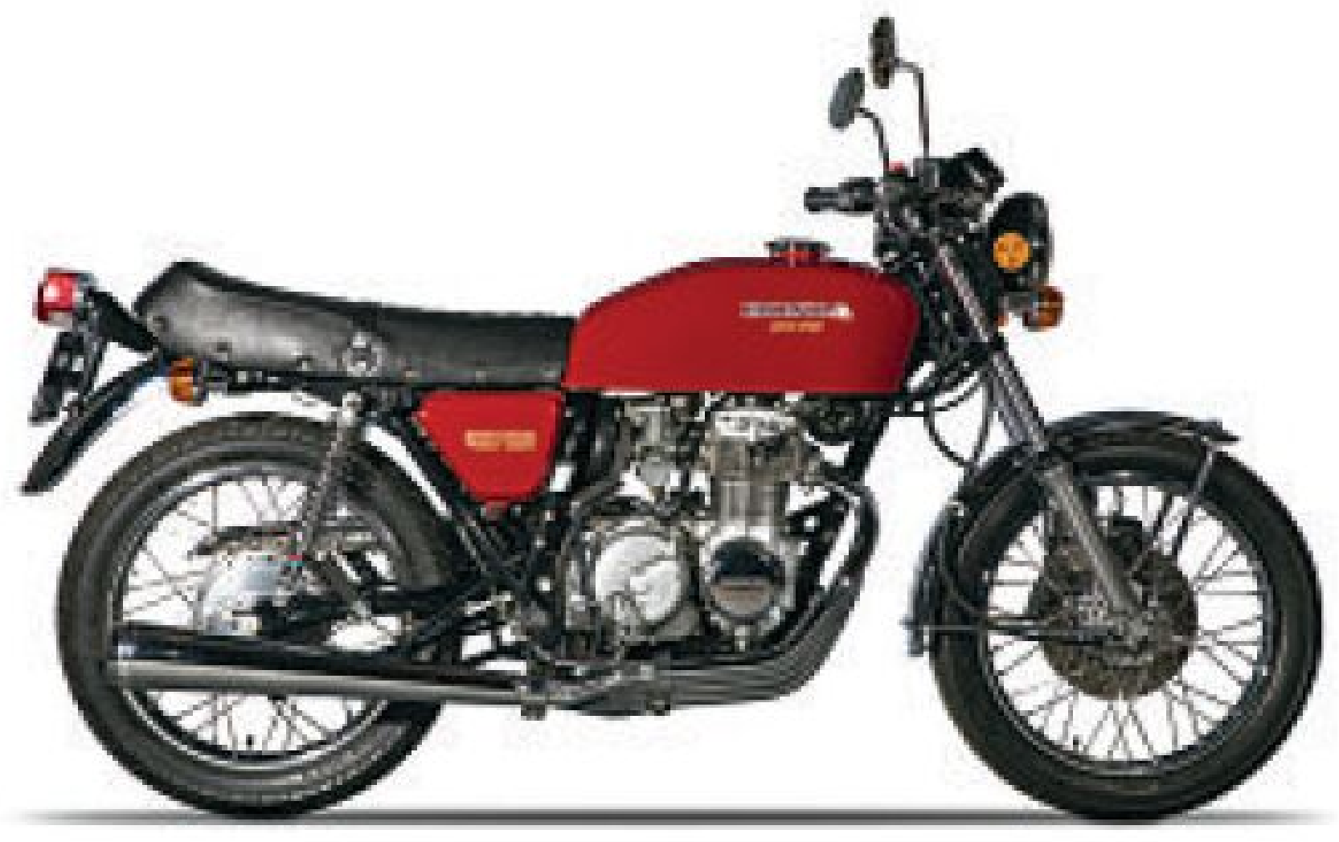


1975

CB400F available from March in UK in varnish blue or ruby red.

US models fitted mid-season with higher handlebars and forward-set rider footrests.

UK models changed from frame no. 1056883 with passenger footrests moved from the swing arm to frame-mounted brackets.



1976

US market models have ruby red or parakeet yellow tanks and black side panels.

A 398cc (51 x 48.8mm) version is produced for the Japanese market.

1976

US market models have ruby red or parakeet yellow tanks and black side panels.

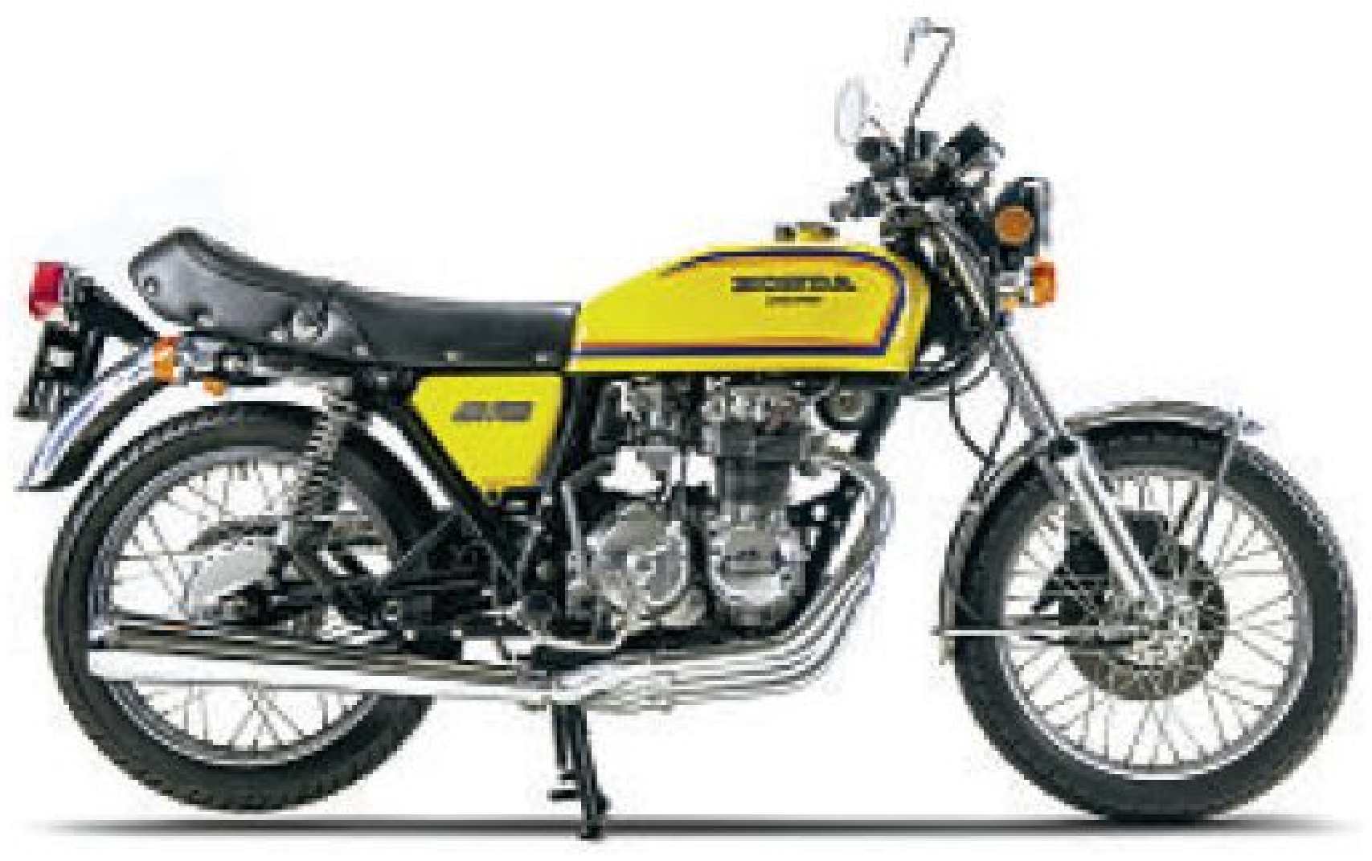
A 398cc (51 x 48.8mm) version is produced for the Japanese market.

1977

Locking fuel cap, no other changes.

1978

F2 version with new paint – candy Antares or parakeet yellow, both with pinstripes; American bikes retain black side panels – and from engine no. 1084315. longer cylinder head studs.



CB400 Four mega fan Jude Brown

Fans of the Honda CB400 Four don't get more enthusiastic and committed than Jude Brown, president of the Honda Owners Club GB, and one of its two classic secretaries.

Learning to ride at 17, she's been in the HOC since 1980 when she helped set up the West London branch. Her first CB400F2 was bought for £600 in 1982, having suffered what she called the worst Honda ever – a CB250G5!

"It was love at first ride," she says of the 400 Four. "The acceleration was amazing and with those iconic sweeping pipes it was a work of art. It handled like a dream and was easy to corner and ground the foot-pegs." Apart from rain affecting the HT leads, TUF 756S was fairly bulletproof over the years, including lots of touring in Europe.

As it was Jude's only transport, a back-up was needed, so it had to be another 400 four. This was an F1 with an 'awful' fairing. "This I kept until I realised that 400 Fours live forever and it was surplus to requirements."

As the miles on 'TUF' built up, Jude decided to give it a 460 Yoshimura conversion and a Dream Machine repaint. "When all the parts were reunited I had the most amazing looking bike," she says. "This served me well for many more years until children stopped play for a while. It was sold in 1993 when it had done around 90,000 miles."

A third 400 four, an F1 with 10,000 miles clocked, was bought after a friend who owned it in the HOC died. This – Jude calls it OTO – also was given a custom paint finish with a much deeper red silver flake finish. "I would only sell if I became so doddery I couldn't ride."

Jude's verdict on the CB400 Four: "It's the most beautiful Honda produced, with classic styling, and joy to ride and simple to maintain. But the front brake is poor with an aversion to wet weather and seems even more feeble when you swap from a modern bike."

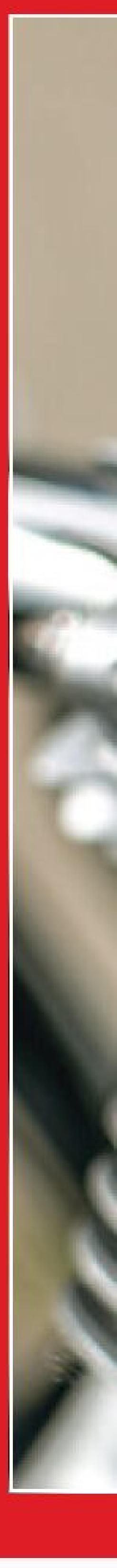
ABOVE: Does one need any more than a 400 Four?

dealers, etc.; this was their market research. It didn't mean that we always got what we wanted. Of course, the size of the US market at that time meant that they had enormous influence and the Japanese market regulations often influenced engine capacities. By the mid-70s we were only just beginning to organise ourselves in Europe to provide a consolidated view on model requirements.

"The 400 Four was introduced at the beginning of one of the most imaginative periods at Honda R&D. They had not long had independence after the separation of car and motorcycle development after a fairly fallow period while resources had been rather concentrated on car development. The 350 Four (launched in 1972) had never been a contender for us in the UK as the price/performance levels were unsuitable. Exactly the opposite was true of the 400 Four."

Surprisingly, Davison thought the styling was a little dull: "...apart from the exhaust which became quite iconic. All of the bike's success was down to the riding experience and value it gave riders looking for a small four-stroke sports bike."

In the three years that I'd been testing bikes at Motor Cycle, from 125cc runabouts, 250cc



two-stroke sports twins, to fire-breathing 1000cc Italian superbikes and racers like Yamaha's TZ700 four, I thought I'd seen it all.

But after riding the CB400 Four from Honda dealership Tippets in south-west London, I realised quickly that something quite remarkable had been achieved. Trickling through the suburbs, the bike was utterly smooth and refined, the exhaust note purring in its wake. Then I turned south on to the dual-carriageway Kingston bypass and revved it through the six-speed gearbox to the 9500rpm red-line. It took off like a rocket.

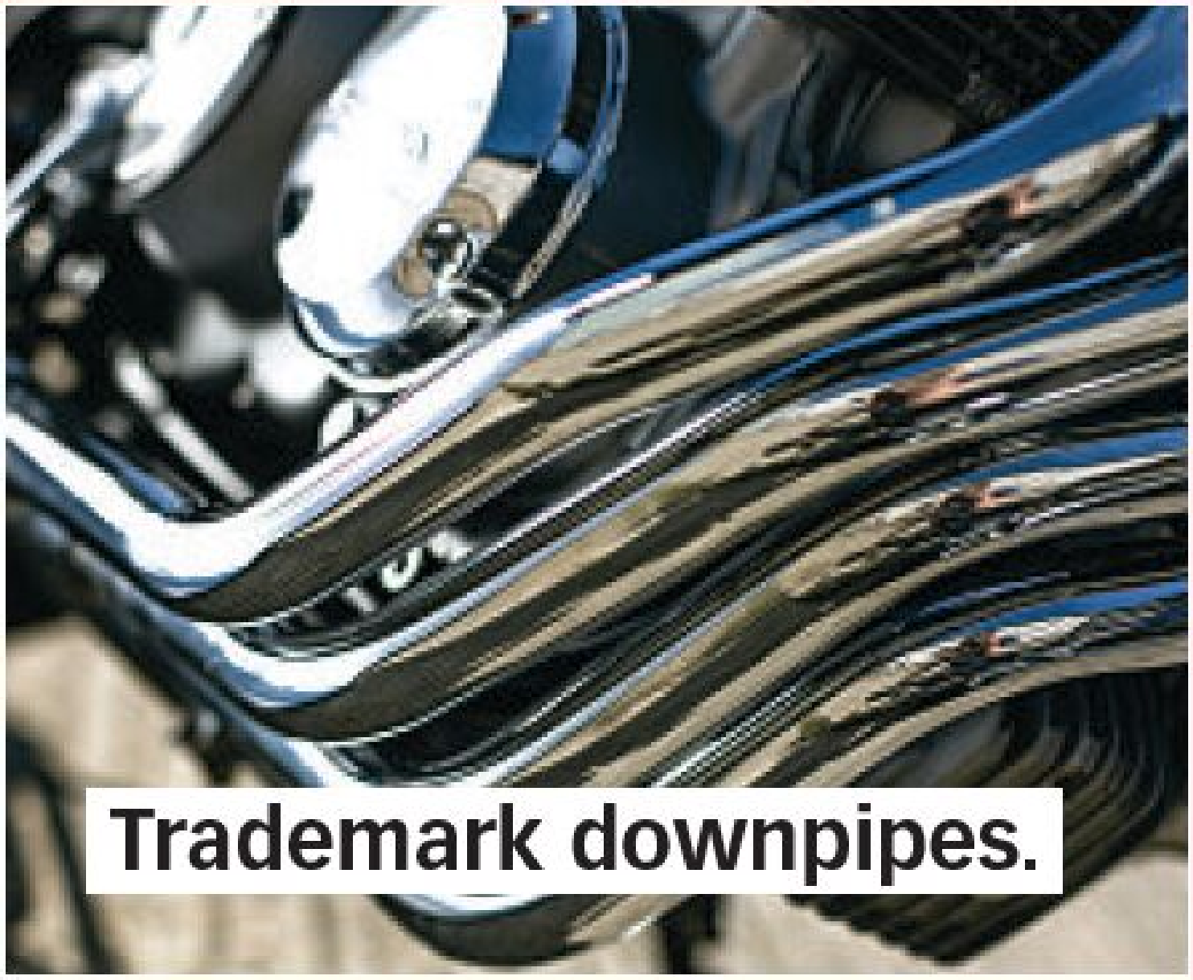
On the bypass, the super-sports aspect of the CB400F's character was revealed. Above 6000rpm response was markedly more lively, with the turbine-like power not tailing off until the revs had topped the red-line at 10,000rpm, by which time the exhaust was emitting a spine-tingling banshee wail. We'd never been able to see five figures on a road bike's rev-counter before.

On the open road you could cruise comfortably at up to 85mph, but you'd need to dance on the gear pedal for overtaking, which was part of the fun. As I wrote in the paper the following month: 'It cruises at 45mph with all the serene grace of a Royal garden party. It purrs and coos with all the soft innocence of a pair of doves. But drop two or three gears, and gun it, and Honda's new CB400 Four transforms into a tyre-spinning, screaming 10,000rpm reincarnation of a Grand Prix bike. Either way, whether a boulevard bird-puller or a boy racer, the CB400F marks an important turning point in the Japanese company's policy. For they've actually gone and done it! Honda have a super-sports bike worthy of the title – in every aspect of its performance as well as its exciting appearance."

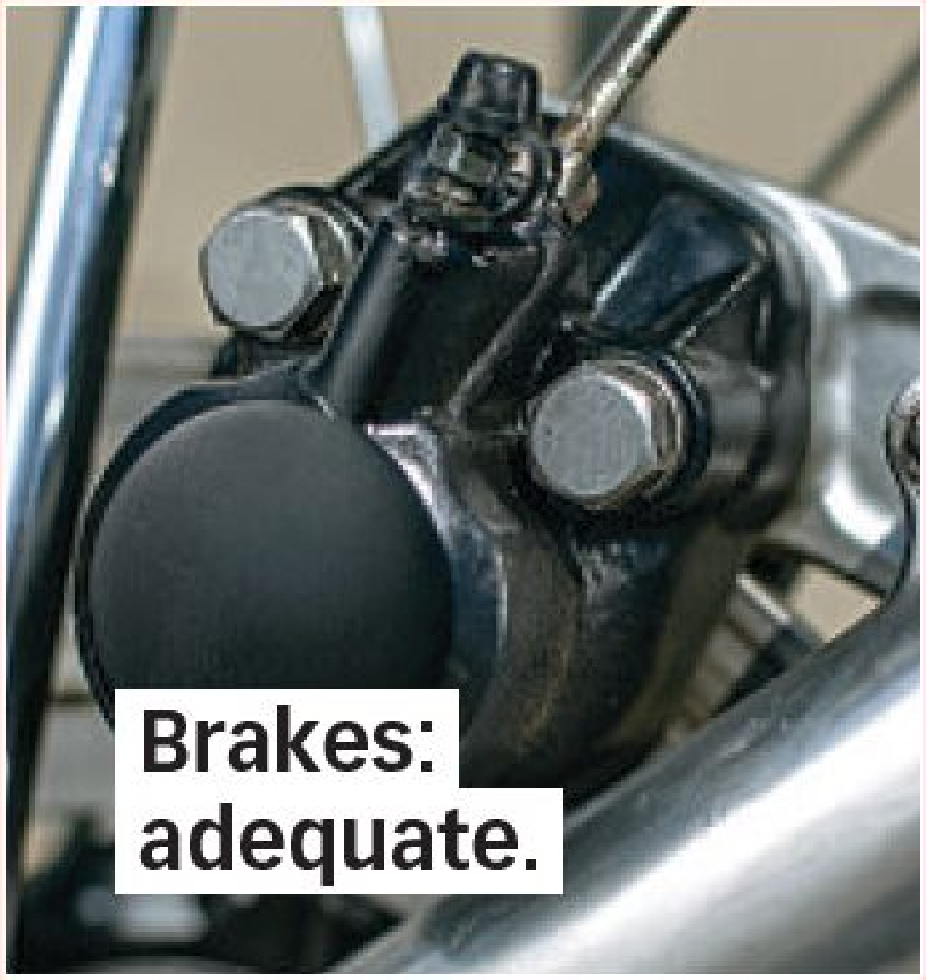
Just how versatile the Honda CB400 Four was shown by its performance figures measured at MIRA's proving ground. On a misty and cold day a week or so after I collected the bike, it clocked a two-way flat-out average of 104.0mph, only

Four's motor is unburstable...

Keep carbs clean!



Trademark downpipes.



Brakes: adequate.

CB400 Four's 50th birthday

Dave Silver, who has run one of the most successful Honda parts businesses from his base in Suffolk for many years, has long been a supporter of the CB400 Four cult.

After having gathered parts from dealers in North America and Europe, in 2011 he invited customers on his database to offer their bikes for sale.

That produced about 110 machines in various condition, but once James May – of Top Gear fame – expressed an interest in the CB400 Four, Dave found he had a waiting list of 150 who wanted restored bikes.

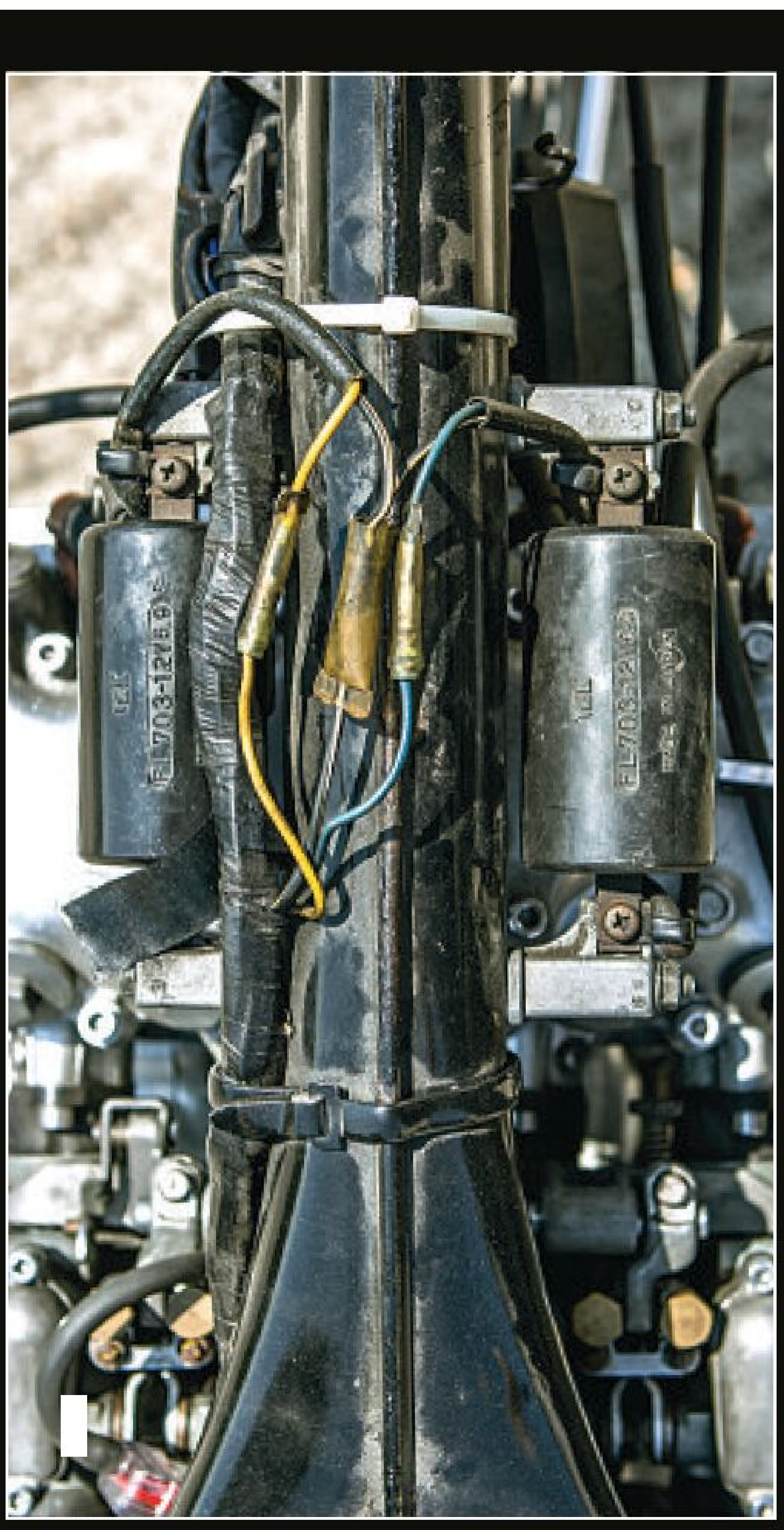
Dave finds that there is still demand for project bikes. "Supply of spares remain very good so it's a good home restoration project model," he says. "Prices have peaked and remain at around £8k for a good restored one. There was a brand-new one in a crate which sold for £11k+ a few years back!"

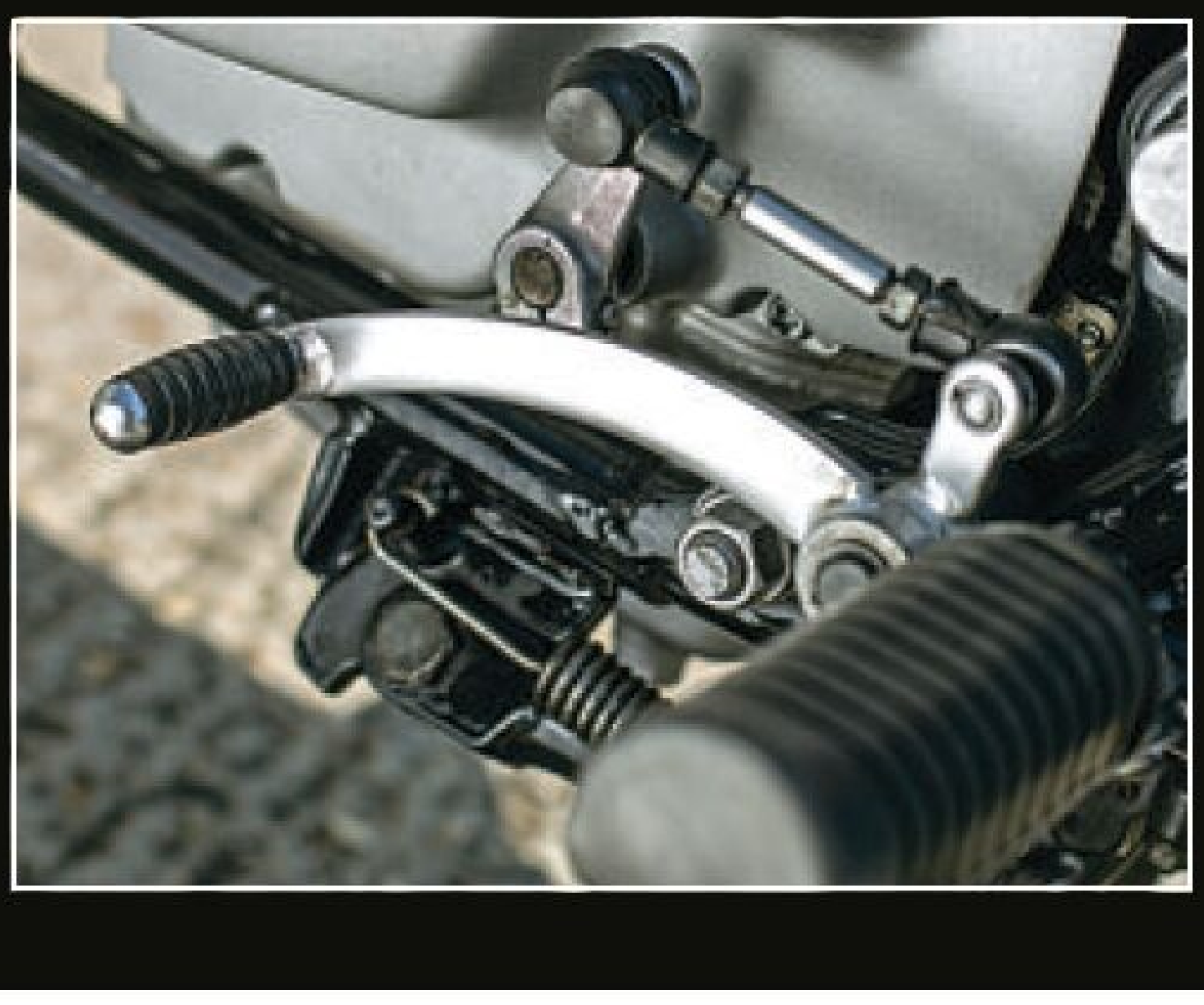
The cult has grown from strength to strength. Last September, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the launch of the CB400 Four, Dave Silver Spares hosted a gathering at Leiston that attracted more than 500 visitors with 250 machines on show, making it the largest ever of its kind. The event was supported by the VJMC and the Honda Owners Club, with entertainment provided by a rock band.

The Best in Class competition attracted more than 50 entries with prizes in six categories:

1) Best Most Original CB400F sponsored by Bonhams Auctions – Dave Heppell from Kent
2) Best Restored CB400F sponsored by Dream Machine Superpaint – Chris Rushton from Nottinghamshire
3) Best Customised CB400F sponsored by The VJMC – Philip Odlin from Lincolnshire
4) Furthest Travelled CB400F sponsored by the Honda Owners Club – Paul Gelsthorpe from Surrey
5) Highest Mileage CB400F sponsored by Motion Works Management – Alan Lucas from Cambridgeshire
6) Judges' Favourite CB400F sponsored by David Silver Spares – Stephen Pendlebury from Denbighshire.

Parts are plentiful.





ABOVE: **Strip-down shot shows the bike's overall simplicity.**

slightly down on the CB500 Four, but more than any 350 or 400 previously tested, even Yamaha's RD350A twin (103.3mph) or Kawasaki's KH400 triple (100.5mph).

The CB400 Four was also much lighter – by 23kg – than the 201kg with a gallon of fuel of the CB500 Four, so it zipped through the standing quarter-mile with a time of 14.9 seconds at a terminal speed of 87.3mph, half-a-second quicker than the bigger bike. Unsurprisingly, the Honda didn't match the sporty two-strokes through the quarter-mile but it was close to the Yamaha's (14.4s/88.5mph) and the Kawasaki's (14.75s/88.8mph).

Where the Honda scored was in its meagre fuel consumption: at a steady 70mph it clocked 54mpg, while the Yamaha could manage just 44mpg and the Kawasaki a shockingly low 24mpg.

The CB400 Four's four-cylinder engine featured an overhead camshaft, chain driven from the centre of the crankshaft, a chain driven countershaft to the clutch and gearbox, and four 20mm Keihin carburettors.

Although our test bike was a US model with the lights permanently switched on with the ignition, it was otherwise identical to the European versions. Appealing details included the rear-set foot-rests. The left necessitated a short linkage for the gear lever but this only enhanced the sporty feel of the machine. On the right, the foot-rest hinged up to clear the kick-start lever, reinforcing the 'trick' nature of the bike.

It was all the better for providing brilliant handling. Until then, most Japanese bikes couldn't hold a candle to European machines, but the CB400 Four showed that the factory had learnt something about getting the steering geometry and weight balance right. The bike steered naturally and invited being cranked into bends without fear of decking any hardware, and handling stability was all the better for the reasonably stiff and well-damped suspension.

This was in dramatic contrast to the CB500 Four, which I had tested three years earlier. That was refined enough, but alongside the CB400 Four it was like a comfy armchair. The smaller four felt taut and agile yet was just as smooth and silky. The 'Super Sport' decal on the fuel tank told the story.

It wasn't all glossy though. The otherwise potent disc brake proved wanting in the rain, and I once found myself with a flat battery when I switched on the ignition and then had a chat, because the headlamp was on. Disconnecting the lights, the bike fired up on the kick-lever!

Yet despite receiving rave reports from magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, the CB400 Four was met with indifference by Middle America, whose riders preferred a less racy feel in a more

HONDA
HONDA
SUPER SPORT
400FOUR
HONDA

BELOW: **Clean and simple colour schemes also made a difference.**

passenger-friendly package. Honda diluted the bike's sporty riding position, but it wasn't enough and after four model years in 1977 the CB400 Four was pensioned off and replaced by the CB400T, a completely new and more versatile (as Honda's marketing people saw it) six-valve twin.

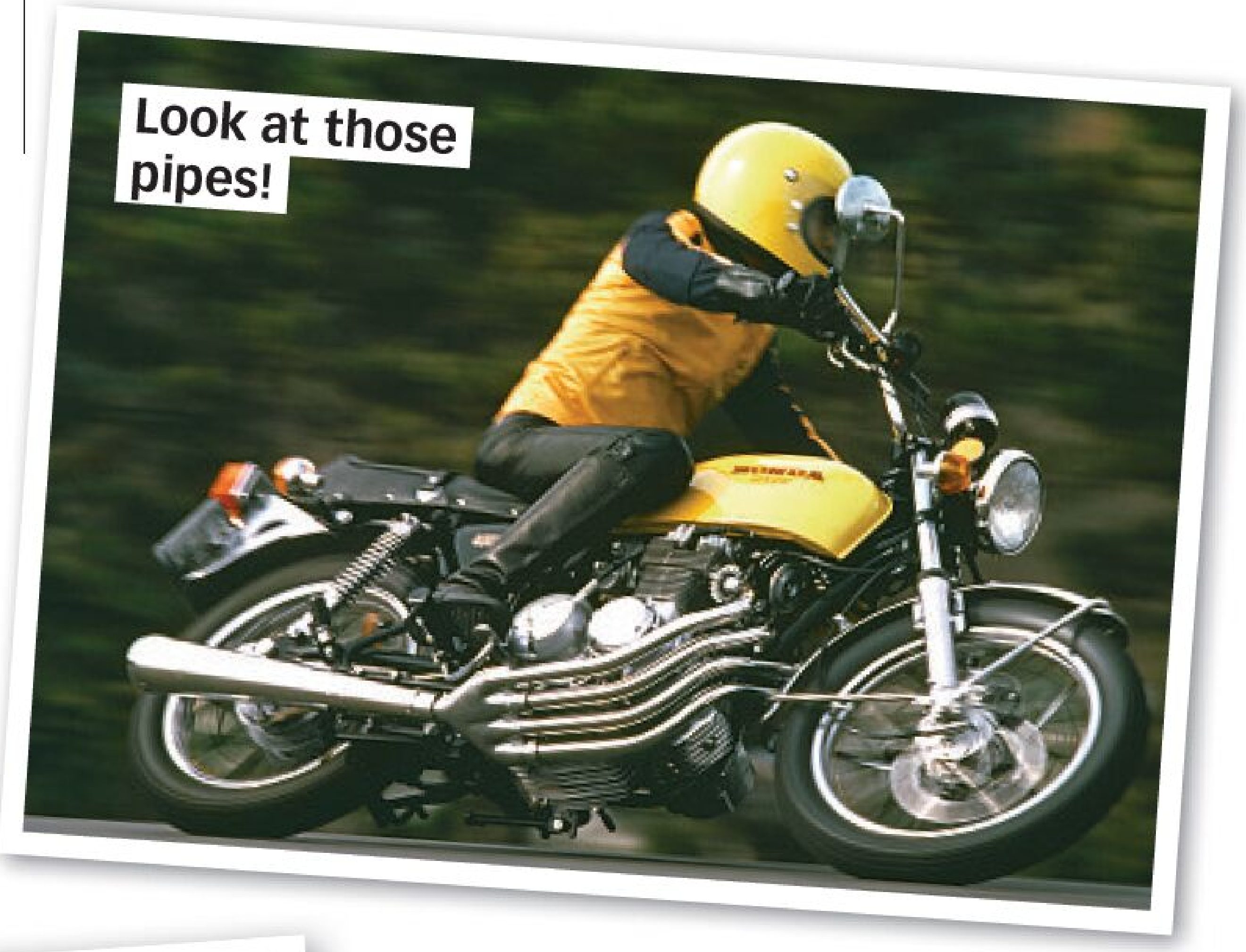
America's tastes dictated global markets, so in 1978 European riders also lost the CB400 Four and established what has evolved into a cult following worldwide after an estimated 110,000 machines had been produced.

Whatever, Honda's CB400 Four was my top bike of the 1975 year, and the best all-rounder, with Laverda's 140mph 3CE best for performance and the Gold Wing best for touring.

Owners backed up the reports and in a review in Motor Cycle at the end of 1976 gave the CB400 Four an 8.3 out of 10 rating, better than Kawasaki's 903cc Z1. Scores above 9 out of 10 were given for its smoothness, starting, reliability, handling, riding position and oil tightness (clearly still a concern in those days). Relatively poor scores for the gearbox, mud-guarding and horn spoilt the overall average.

Today the CB400 Four scores highly as both a desirable and useable classic. *cmm*

Makes you wonder why Honda don't build a retro-replica of this thing right now, today...



Look at those pipes!

Racing successes!

The Honda CB400 Four even became a top race machine.

Soon after its Honda supplement was published in March 1975, the renamed Motor Cycle Weekly declared it would be entering a three-bike team on Honda 400 Fours in the Isle of Man TT production race, which that year was to be a handicap event over 10 laps, the longest event of its type ever held on the Island.

The bikes, ridden by some successful TT riders of the time, didn't win the team prize after a puncture stopped one of them, but the publicity for dealer Mocheck that prepared the bikes only added to the CB400 Four's sporty image.

One of the machines was also used in a Cadwell Park endurance race. The high spot, however, was when Tony Rutter won the Daily Express-sponsored production race at the British GP in 1976 on one of the three bikes, by now much more developed with 460cc and a load of tuning mods. "The Honda was going so fast down the Hanger Straight I was passing Kawasaki 900s and bigger Honda fours. I must have been doing close to 130mph," said Rutter.

The racing glory continued for the CB400 Four in 1977, towards the end of its production life. By then the TT Formula world championships had been established after the Isle of Man had lost its Grands Prix status. But in the TT Formula 3 class, open to 250cc two-strokes and 400cc four-strokes, the Euro model couldn't qualify because its capacity was 408cc.

In Japan, however, the domestic licencing arrangements limited riders to a maximum of 400cc, so Honda produced a 398cc short-stroke version for the home market. Some were imported for the TTF3 race, one of which was raced to victory by John Kidson. So, the CB400 Four added a world title to its glorious list of achievements.

The full story of the Mocheck Honda CB400 racers can be found in the July/August issue of our sister publication, Classic Racer.

SPECIFICATION

HONDA CB400F

ENGINE	Air-cooled in-line four
CAPACITY	408cc (51 x 50mm)
VALVE OPERATION	Single overhead camshaft
COMPRESSION RATIO	9.4 to 1
LUBRICATION	Wet sump, capacity 3.5 litres
IGNITION	Contact breakers and coils
CARBURATION	Four 20mm Keihin
PEAK POWER	37bhp @ 8500rpm
PEAK TORQUE	3.2kg-m @ 7500rpm
PRIMARY DRIVE	Inverted-tooth chain and gear
CLUTCH	Wet multiplate
GEARBOX	Six speed
FINAL DRIVE	5/8 x 3/8in chain
FINAL DRIVE RATIO	38/17
OVERALL RATIOS	20.9, 13.78, 10.52, 8.50, 7.38 & 6.62 to 1.
FRAME	Semi duplex tubular steel cradle
FRONT SUSPENSION	Telescopic fork
REAR SUSPENSION	Swingarm, twin shock, adjustable preload.
WHEELS	Laced spoke, steel rim, front tyre 300 x S18, rear 350 x S18
FRONT BRAKE	Single 267mm disc, floating caliper
REAR BRAKE	160mm drum Electrical system Alternator 156W, 60/55W quartz headlamp, starter motor
BATTERY	12V-12Ah
FUEL TANK	14 litres
WHEELBASE	1,355mm
SEAT HEIGHT	790mm
CASTOR ANGLE	63.5 deg
TRAIL	85mm
WEIGHT (MEASURED)	178kg inc 4.5 litres of fuel

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MUSCLE MEMORY

Bertie Simmonds enjoys an 'original' retro muscle bike, which can trace its roots back to the early 1990s but which is now a bona fide modern classic.

WORDS: **BERTIE SIMMONDS** PICS: **MARK 'WEEBLE' MANNING, BERTIE SIMMONDS ARCHIVE, MORTONS ARCHIVE**

It's a classic true-ism that 'the more things change, the more they stay the same'. Or is it that things just go in cycles?

One of these things is true, anyways, or perhaps both. I mean, take the retro motorcycle. It's hip, it's happening and it's like 'now'… You only have to take a look at some manufacturers' line-ups to see that many have a 'retro', 'heritage' or 'classic' line of bikes harking back to the good old days. For some other manufacturers, old-looking bikes are all they do… and they do very well out of them indeed, many becoming best-sellers…

So, we know then that nostalgia sells and we've enjoyed many cycles of it. When embarking on this test, I recall a large number of previous group road tests I've been on with various other magazines over the last three decades. All using 'retros', most of which now are classics in their own right. From the mid-1990s through to today, I've enjoyed the simplicity of the big, naked retro.

And this is one of the first… I threw a leg over a Yamaha XJR some 30 years ago and I was a fan from the off. What I loved about the XJR1200 was the sheer simplicity of the lines, the exposed 'proper' air-cooled motor and the naked, no-nonsense approach she had to biking.

Launched for 1995, the 1200 was a response to the previous Kawasaki Zephyr range in 400, 550, 750 and 1100ccs and (in Japan at least) the Honda CB1000 'Big One'. Yamaha produced an XJR400 in 1993 for Japan and they also sexed up the 1200 with a race series with guest rides from the likes of Kenny Roberts, Randy Mamola and Christian Sarron with their own saucy paint schemes and then – for 1999 – increased the cubic capacity by 63cc to create the XJR1300.

Yamaha had to move things on because the opposition had, too. In 1997, Kawasaki had brought out the ZRX1100, the 'R' model with the Eddie Lawson green, bikini fairing and ZZ-R1100 detuned motor. Honda would eventually bring the CB1300 to the UK in the early 2000s and Suzuki the GSX1400. Purists would dismiss the liquid-cooled Kwak and Honda, but they still looked the part and performed well. I can still recall the positives and negatives of all the main big naked retros as I spent so much enjoyable saddle time in all of them and even owned a couple of them.

TIMELINE

1993: YAMAHA XJR400

Baby version for Japan but some found their way to the UK. FZ400-based motor was 399cc, six-speed with Mikuni carbs: 53bhp at 11,000rpm and 25lb-ft at 9000rpm made it a bit rev-happy. A number of later, updated versions were launched in Japan, including an 'R' version with bikini fairing.

1995-1998: YAMAHA XJR1200

In comes the 1200 XJR: 1188cc, four-stroke four and air-cooled. Power was around 98bhp at 8000rpm and 63lb-ft at 6000rpm. Twin-piston front brake calipers with 298mm twin discs up front. Other versions made for Japan included an R version with bikini fairing and the SP with uprated suspension as the base for the race series.

1999-2006: YAMAHA XJR1300

More cubic capacity upped the cc to 1251cc, now more than 100bhp at 8000rpm and 74lb-ft at 6000rpm. Brakes became Blue-sport Sumitomo front and rear. SP version added Ohlins rear shocks only adjustable for pre-load. Ohlins became standard on later (2002-on) machines with more adjustment.

2007: YAMAHA XJR1300

In comes fuel-injection and a catalyser to satisfy the-then latest Euro 3 emissions laws. Performance was not impacted. Bikes from 2004 got an immobiliser.

2015: YAMAHA XJR1300 CAFÉ AND RACER

Restyled XJR with reduced tank capacity, smaller seat and a bikini version in certain markets.

About a quarter of a century old now. And it looks 50 years old! That's classic retro...

Look after Blue-spots and they will look after you.

But it is the XJR we are here for. And let's look at this one – it's a beauty with an aggressive edge. That yellow Yamaha speed-block/Kenny Roberts-inspired paint gives the bike a big 'wow' factor, as do the 'look at me' Ohlins piggy-back rear shocks and tail-unit sticker.

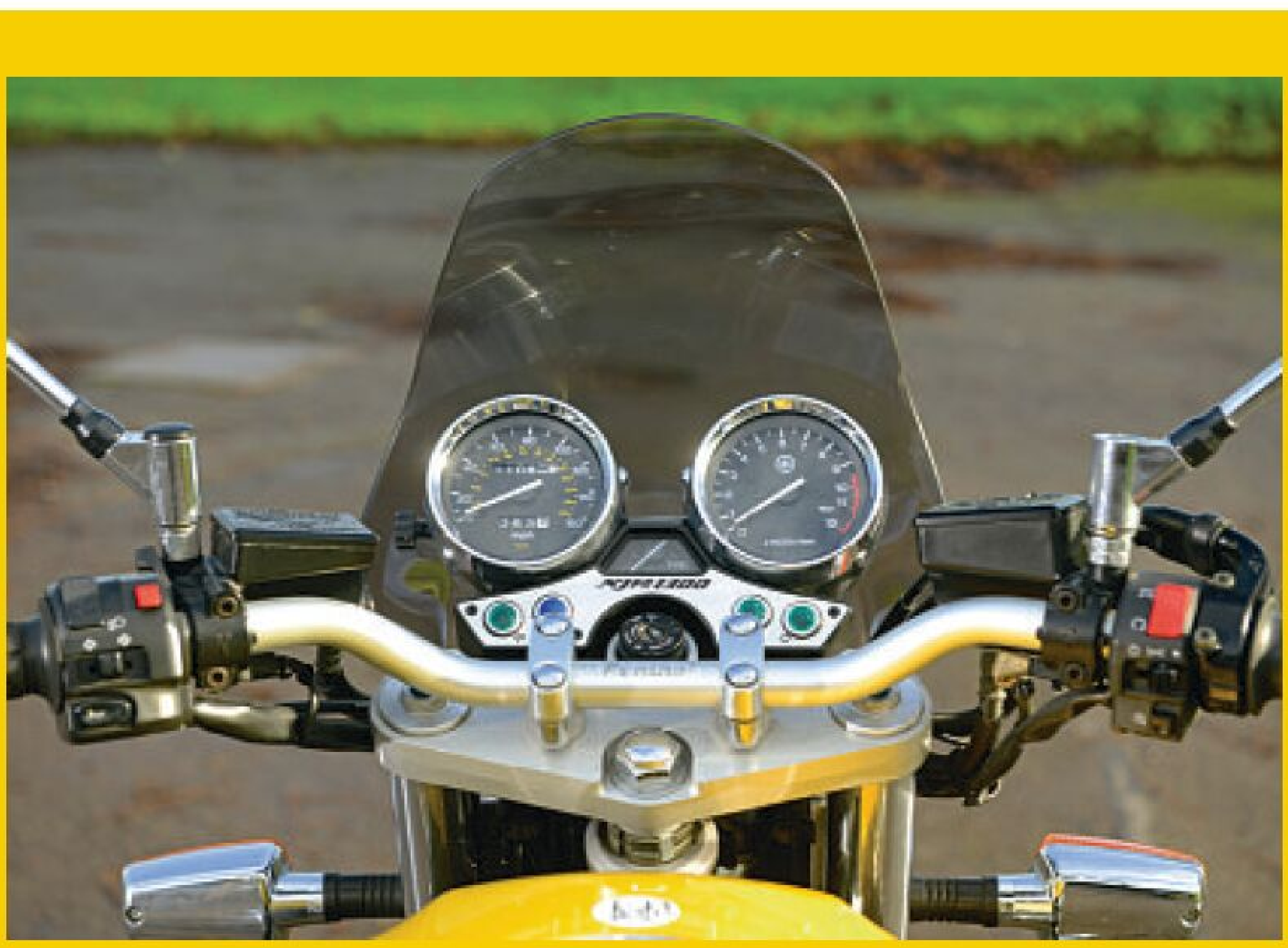
That huge motor begs you to look at it, as does the girder-like swingarm. It's all just so BIG and I love it.

Now, I know some may find the colours a little garish, but the great thing about the XJR is that, should you want to go under the radar a little, a long production run in both forms means there are plenty of understated colours out there, should you want one. That means plenty of blacks, silvers, blues and even a red or blue speed-block version of what we see here.

Swinging a leg over the Yam, it's still a whopper. I've recently come from riding a new Honda Gold Wing Bagger, but the XJR still doesn't seem a tiddler in comparison: it's wide, it's long, it feels low. Is it a cruiser? Nah, not in the traditional sense of the word.

The bike in picture is a 2002 machine, shot some years ago, and it belonged to reader Jonathan Davis. The only thing I'm going to miss on today's identical ride is the fly-screen that Jonathan had on his bike – they make a big difference.

But that's for later, for now let's face forward and what do we see? Well, it's an attractive view. Two dominant chrome-rimmed clocks, a useful, central fuel gauge and some very 1970s-esque idiot lights for just high-beam, turn indicators and neutral. What more do we want? This bike doesn't have the replacement Renthal bars but it's otherwise the



Renthals and screen differ from standard XJRs.

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Like you need a big sticker to say what you have?

At last: A big bike for big Bert!

same. The overall feeling is one of happy familiarity, sat here, all those years after the first time.

A couple of people I know that have owned the XJR also owned the XS1100 as well as a few FJs, and they say they all almost feel like very familiar/favourite shoes, such is the family lineage.

With that in mind, the XJR's motor can at least trace its way back to the FJ1100/1200 series and that's a good thing as they are air-cooled and blessed with plenty of motive muscle. We will whip that light hydraulic clutch in and there's a light burble from the shiny twin pipes.

And let us first praise that marvellous motor. In isolation this is a wonderfully flexible power unit; don't worry about looking at the rev-counter in eager anticipation of getting anywhere near that 9500rpm red-line. You won't need to check, that tingle through the bars and foot-pegs will tell you when. Ahhh… like old cars, older bikes (with even older engines) always talk to us, don't they?

Okay, so you may forget yourself and try and lift for another gear when you hit top (fifth) but you'll soon stop doing that. Instead, you'll be sat at anything between 50-75mph with the needle around 3-7000rpm just backing off the throttle and opening it up, depending on whether the vanishing point of the next turn is getting closer or further away. It's all just effortless, riding on a nice amount of torque (a claimed 77-78lb-ft @ 6000-6600rpm) and often navigating corners on a whiff of throttle. Thankfully, this pre-fuel-injected XJR (see timeline) fuels very sweetly indeed.

ABOVE: **Handling ain't bad, braking is better.**

Of course, should you want to, you can rev all you want but, for me, actually searching for the claimed 100-105bhp up at 8000rpm is like finding your best mate's wife attractive: it can be nice, it can make you tingle in certain places, but it just don't feel right…

Back in the day, Yamaha really took time developing the handling of the original XJR series. Jiro Izaki was part of the team (apparently their proper title was 'Yamaha's Road Testing Unit, 2nd Project Engineering Division') that helped develop the bike. Yamaha wanted a 'light and sharp' feeling to the handling – which has to be difficult with a bike of this size. Maybe they got it right… after all, they did end up racing these things.

Looking back in today's world I say 'Yes, she's a big lady' (224 kilos or so, 240 fully fuelled) and you'd think the XJR would be a bit of a handful out

Looks good, grunts well.

Twin pipes a bit quiet. Shocks shout louder!

on the road, but it's not quite what you'd think. Weight can work for you – making the XJR a more assured and stable ride than you'd expect. No, of course it's not some road-laser two-stroke or modern sports-bike for the road, but it's also not quite a ponderous old bus... even if I am.

On this test bike the anchors are glorious! Oh yes! XJRs of this vintage (post-1999 1300cc revamp) could enjoy similar Sumitomo 'Blue-spot' calipers as seen on the likes of the 1996 Thunderace, 1998 YZF-R1 and 1999 FZS600 Fazer. While some pictures show the original XJR1200 with nice, beefy Brembo calipers, by the time production started the original XJR1200 had some weedy twin-piston calipers.

Unfortunately, good brakes can show up the forks a little (don't they always) and this is the case here with the bike I'm riding today. There seems to be a fair bit of initial dive until things get under control. Perhaps these forks could benefit from a refresh... remember the 43mm telescopic forks are adjustable for pre-load only.

It's a similar story at the rear-end. The Ohlins rear shocks look the part (of course they would) but I feel there's a bit of badge envy going on. It's like with the YZF750R in 1995 when it got an 'Ohlins' rear shock: it's thought that these shocks are simply badged up as Ohlins and not anything special but a shrewd marketing ploy as Yamaha had bought the Swedish suspension giant during the 1990s...

2015 XJR1300 Café vs 2002 XJR1300 SP

A decade back now, a colleague got 'bored' of running a long-term 2015 Yamaha XJR1300 so I was asked if I would take it over... Hell yeah!

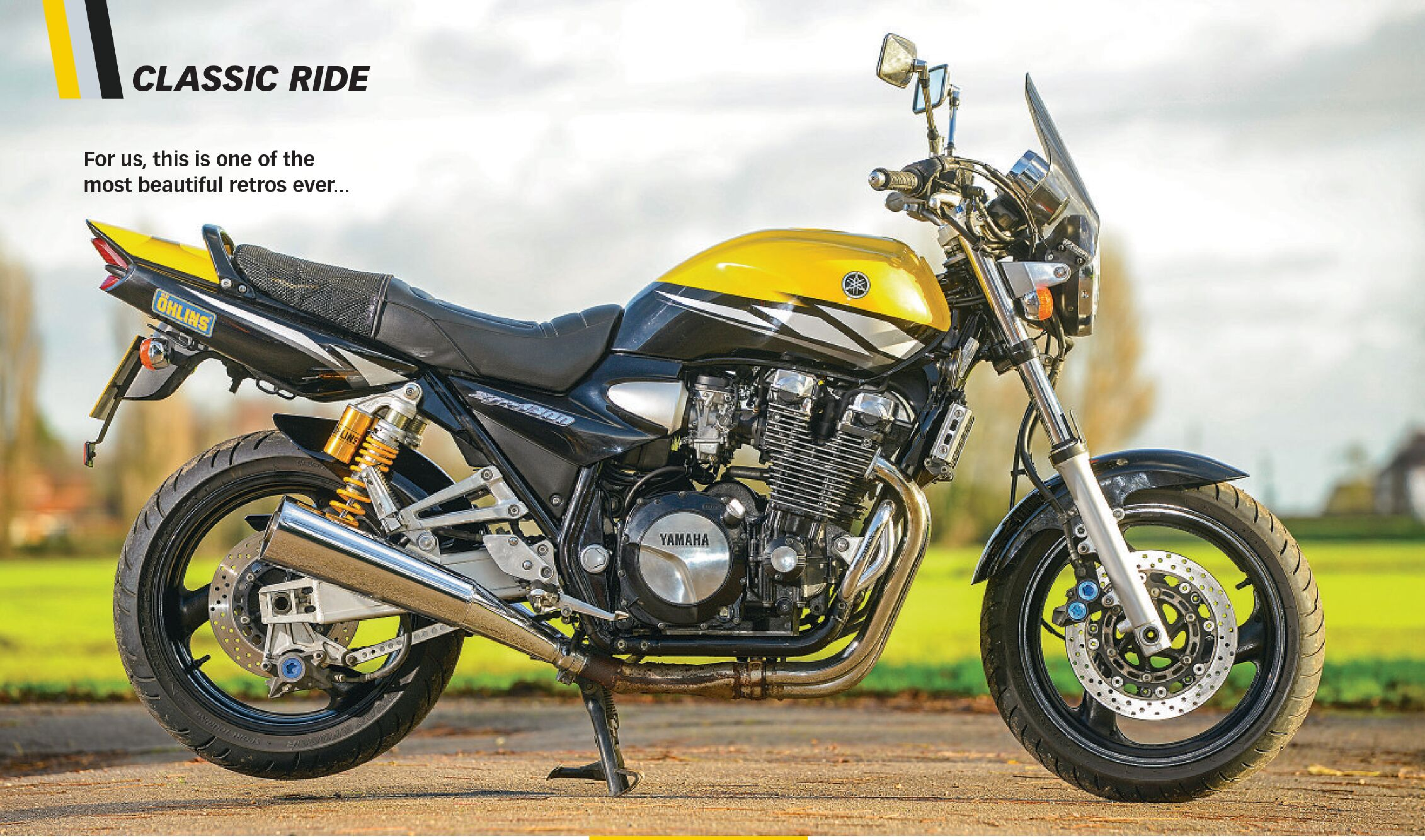
If I was expecting a happy return to the XJR, I was disappointed. I mean, look at it... Gone was the traditional, classic 1970s look of the 1995-2014 XJR, instead you had what was called a 'café racer' of sorts or perhaps more accurately some Yamaha marketing take on one.

Riding the bike and there were more similarities than differences and, if you were honest with yourself, the ride was better, too; 10mm less wheelbase gave the bike a bit more zip in the turns. The brakes were great, still being the Sumitomo Blue-spot calipers. The motor matched the handling, with the (now) fuel-injected bike being even smoother than before. Comfort was brilliant for the solo rider: but it was when you got off the thing...

And you'd be getting off the thing more often. The fuel light would come on between 65-80 miles, thanks to the tank being reduced from 21 litres to a ridiculous 14.5.

While previously seeing the bike in its entirety was a pleasure, this thing, well... You'll see the cut-down rear-end, which is still the current fashion, meaning you couldn't really take a sizeable pillion, unless you were riding around Hobbiton in The Shire. And the lovely chrome twin-pipes were replaced by the over-long black sausage you see here. Side-panels changed from the old-style triangular ones to ones that seem to resemble number boards, but without numbers... Yamaha even did a bikini-faired version which was even uglier, called the 'Racer'. We've not included this on the timeline in case you're eating...

At the time Yamaha UK actually did a pannier kit for the XJR and a tank bag; God knows why with the lack of pillion provision and range. Price back then was £8599, and it's not surprising that some of these later bikes sit squarely (price-wise) alongside the much better original machines as used prices go.



For us, this is one of the most beautiful retros ever...

I'd probably agree, as a former owner of a Kawasaki ZRX1200R with pukka (and very expensive) Ohlins piggy-back shocks. On my rides on any XJR with the gold shocks on, they're pre-load adjustable only – later models came with Ohlins as standard, but offering more adjustability and these may be better still.

For me, these on this 2002 bike feel a little soft, so more pre-load or a rebuild would be a good thing and at least the Ohlins shocks could be rebuilt as the originals on the standard XJR were apparently not – but then I still bet you'd find someone to do it, even if simply buying replacement shocks would be cheaper. Whatever, you'll soon tap into the relaxed vibe of bend-swinging on the old girl, but if you buy one of these, wise money could be spent on making the suspension tauter.

One thing I will say – oh this thing is comfortable! A big, padded seat – you could do miles on it. Little wonder the tractability of the motor and the comfort sees people load these things up and go touring on them. Even if buying an old FJ11/12 would probably be more sensible. My ride saw a bit of neck strain at 70mph-plus speeds, but a fly-screen always helps.

We've mentioned flexibility and the XJR really offers just that. Even compared to its peers the seating position is very upright, but the ergonomic feeling is one of control. Those massive mirrors you can see forever in… a quick look then a shoulder check and you're ready to split lanes. Know what I like best? That seat… not just brilliant for the rider, but (unlike any of the modern 'retros') this seat is happy to take two people.

The 21-litre tank means you can do around 175 miles before even worrying about a fill-up, which, allied to the overall comfort, means a sad thing: you're not getting off the bike to look at it as much at fuel and lunch stops. Because that's what you really want to be doing. That massive fuel tank (in any colour) gives presence, the up-and-over cradle frame shows off that mighty motor to its fullest, breathing as it does through that four-into-two complete with shiny olde-skool silencers. You can also then sit there and listen to the 'ting-ting' of the engine cooling, just like proper air-cooled bikes have always done…

I'm a big fan of these retros and I still think it's a real battle between the XJR and Kawasaki's ZRX as to which is the best looking…

I know I say this all the time but… When I get off bikes I really enjoy riding, the first thing I do is head to the various auction sites to see whether I can justify buying one. And even with me owning a ZRX in bits awaiting reconstruction, the XJR offers something a little bit different to really make me want to take the plunge.

At the top of the price list are low-milers. They can still sit at around £5000 for something with around 10k on the clocks, while the original 1200s can be picked up in a rough state and with high miles for a grand or more. Somewhere in the middle (say, £2000-£3000) is the happy place. Just watch out for tat which (for some reason) XJRs seem to attract. We'd try and say 'bonjour' to a mint Yamaha Moto France Blue version, if we could…

Problems? Well, the motor is very robust and the only thing that can really suffer with them is the finish; if the thing is ridden in salty rain, expect flaking paint off the fins. We've mentioned that suspension gets sloppy, even the Blue-spot brakes need regular TLC, clutches can be somewhat frail, and exposed down-pipes can throw in the towel if not looked after. It's a naked bike, after all…

I think the final thing to say is that if you love the look, you'll love this bike. It's honest, it's olde-skool and it's sooo cool – all at once. **cmm**

SPECIFICATION

YAMAHA XJR1300

ENGINE
1251cc, air-cooled, 16-valve, DOHC inline four

MAXIMUM POWER
100bhp @ 8000rpm

MAXIMUM TORQUE
77lb-ft @ 6000rpm

TRANSMISSION
5-speed

FINAL DRIVE
Chain

FRAME
Steel double cradle

SUSPENSION
Front: 43mm telescopic forks, adjustable preload
Rear: Twin Ohlins piggy-back shocks adjustable for preload

BRAKES
Front: Twin 298mm discs with four-piston Sumitomo calipers
Rear: 245mm disc, two-piston caliper

TYRES
Front: 120/70-17
Rear: 180/55-17

SEAT HEIGHT
775mm

WHEELBASE
1510mm

DRY WEIGHT
230kg

FUEL CAPACITY
21 litres

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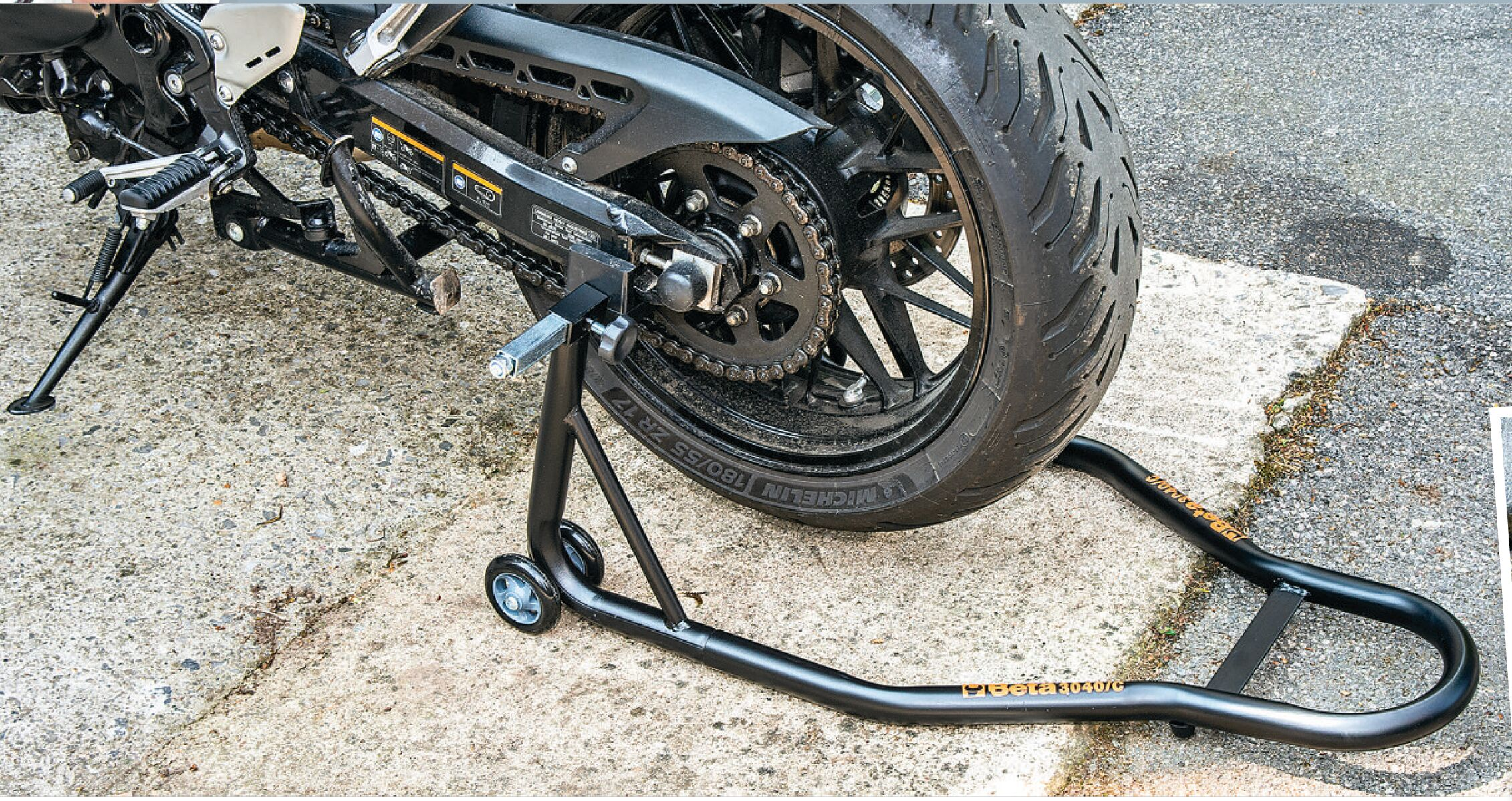


Paddock stands

When I was a lad, the majority of motorcycles came with centre-stands, or main-stands, as they were described by some manufacturers.

Of course, as well, you got a side-stand that was a little more limited in use as you couldn't use one to support the bike vertically whilst you removed wheels, oiled and adjusted drive chains, etc. In the racing world anything that didn't make the bike go faster was removed as it added undesirable weight.

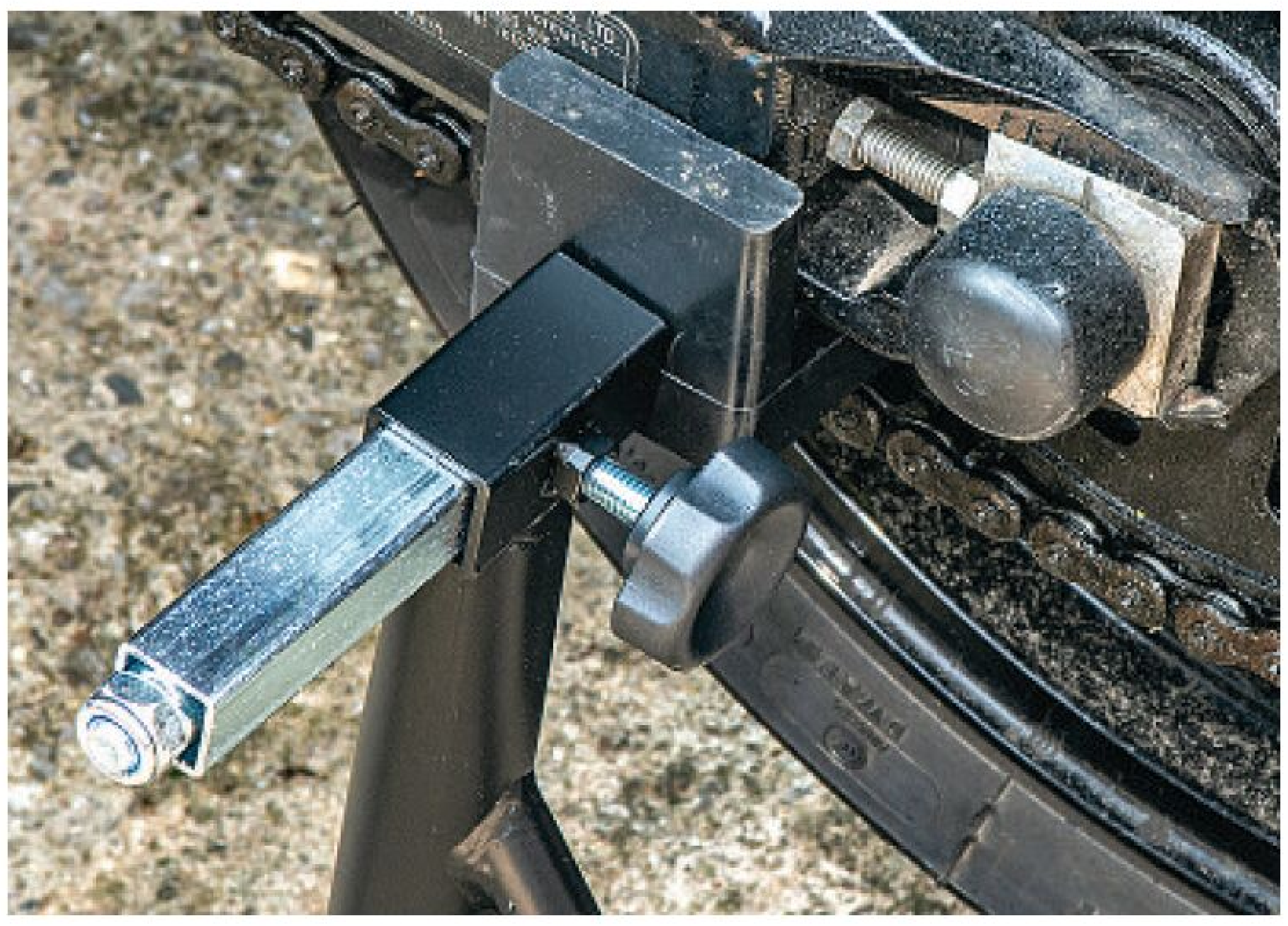
For racing, the lumpy old centre-stand was not only heavy, but also often reduced all important ground clearance, preventing the determined racer from going round corners as fast as he or she might want to. Side-stands and their mounts also tended to be jettisoned.

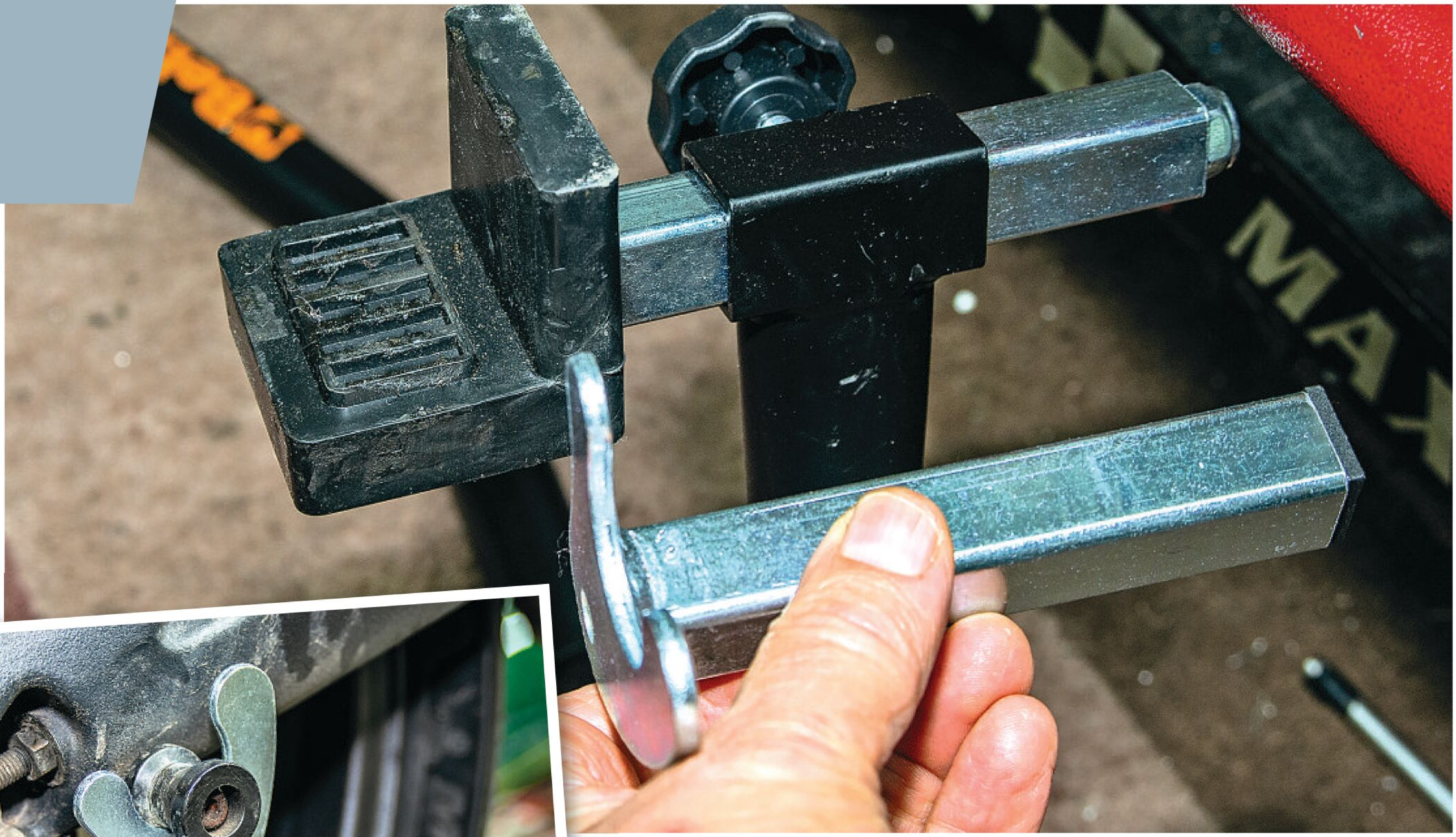
However, unlike a race car, bikes tend to fall over, leaking all their fluids out if they're not going along, so a system had to be devised to maintain a vertical stance when not being spanked within an inch of their being out on track. As race bikes tended to be in a field, traditionally known as a 'paddock', when not earning their keep, the stands used by racers became known as 'paddock stands'.

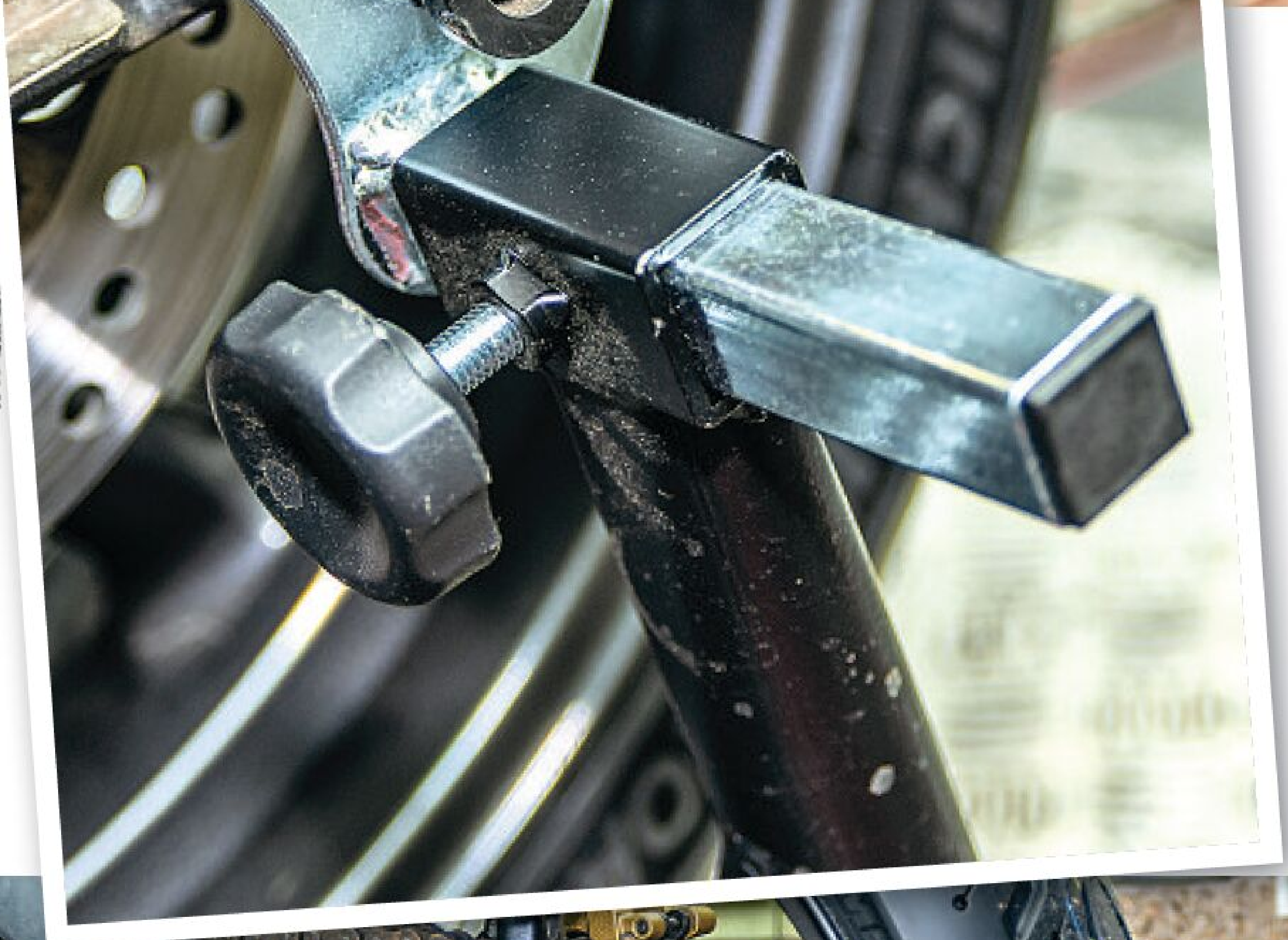
ABOVE: The Beta rear stand supporting SWMBO'S Z900RS in perfect safety.

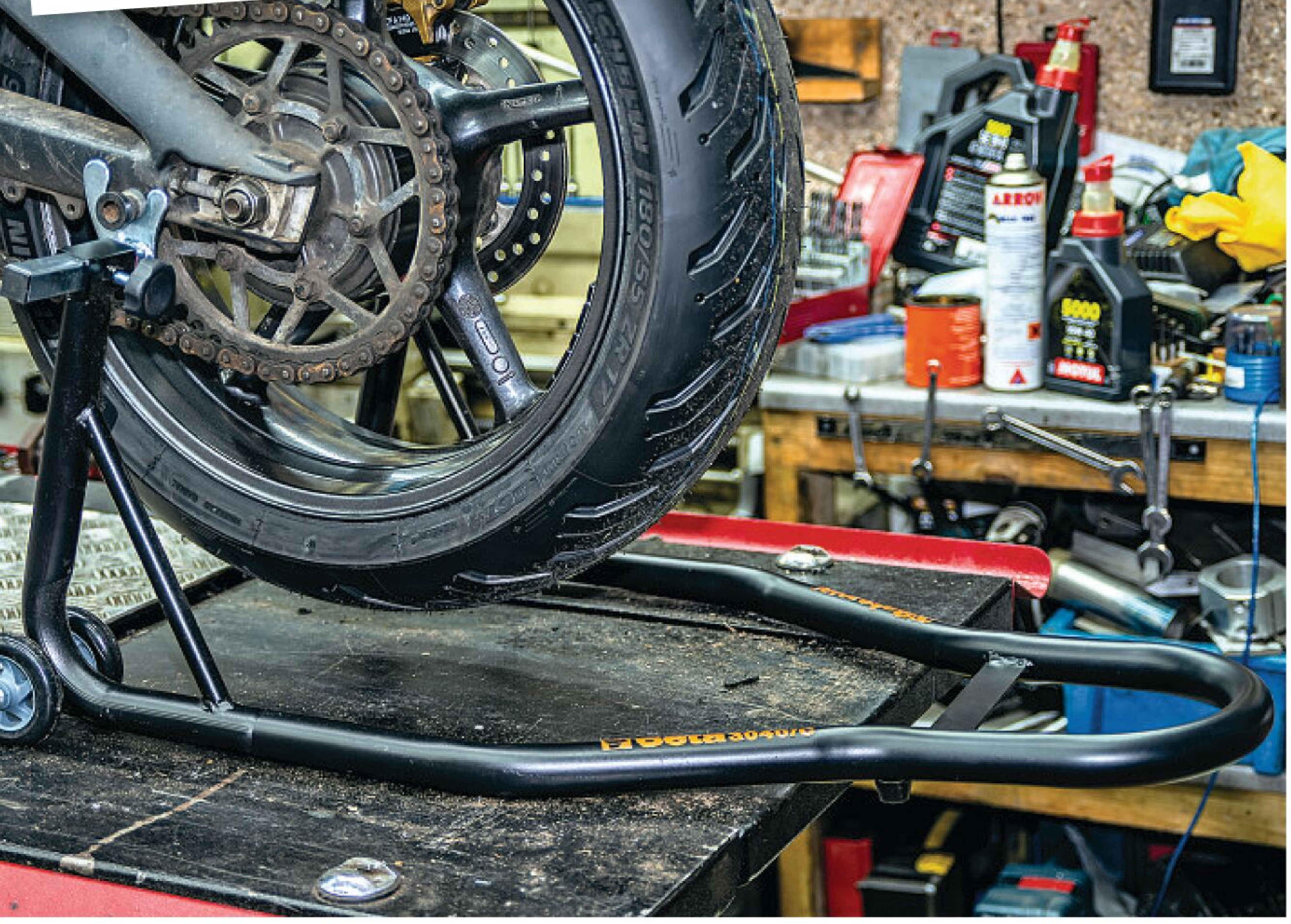
BELOW RIGHT: The stand adapter for bikes without stand bobbins built into the swingarm.

From around the mid-1980s manufacturers started building bikes that aped the machines the buying public watched racing so heroically around the circuits on the weekend. These 'race replicas' were also called 'sports bikes'. These bikes couldn't realistically mimic the fully faired racing machines and have a centre-stand; there simply wasn't room to fit them. As a young lad being deprived of the practicality of a centre-stand was small beer when









ABOVE: The two adapters that come with the Beta rear stand.

LEFT: The bobbin adapter in use.

BELOW: This is the best way to use a rear paddock stand.

weighed up against the kudos of riding a race replica motorcycle.

The lack of a centre-stand did cause problems with maintenance. However… How do you lubricate your chain with both wheels on the ground? As youngsters who had a not-inconsiderable percentage of their weekly wage being snaffled by the HP (Hire Purchase) company, many enlisted the help of a mate to assist in lifting the arse end of the bike in the air for chain oiling. The third-party accessory manufacturers, like Micron, who flogged us noisy, but cool, exhausts and the like, soon cottoned on to a market of selling universal paddock stands to race replica bike owners and, of course, bike repair and servicing companies. We all wanted paddock stands, not just for practical reasons, but it was the height of cool to have stuff that race teams used.

Now, I have a bit of a bee in my bonnet about paddock stands because some years ago I spent a whole day with my friend, the late Johnny Hopkins, servicing 'She Who Must Be Obeyed's' Triumph Street Triple.

I had it on top of a professional bike bench that cost me well north of two grand, supported with a cheap DIY paddock stand. Why? I kept asking myself the same question years after the stand collapsed, dropping her three-year-old Street Triple on its head from one metre on to the concrete floor. It did a lot of expensive damage and required a tank respray, not to mention a lot of grovelling to herself.

Once SWMBO's bike was restored to its former glory, I took an angle grinder to the stand and skipped it. I replaced all my paddock stands with ones made by Italian company Bike-Lift, who make high-end, professional bike benches. ➲

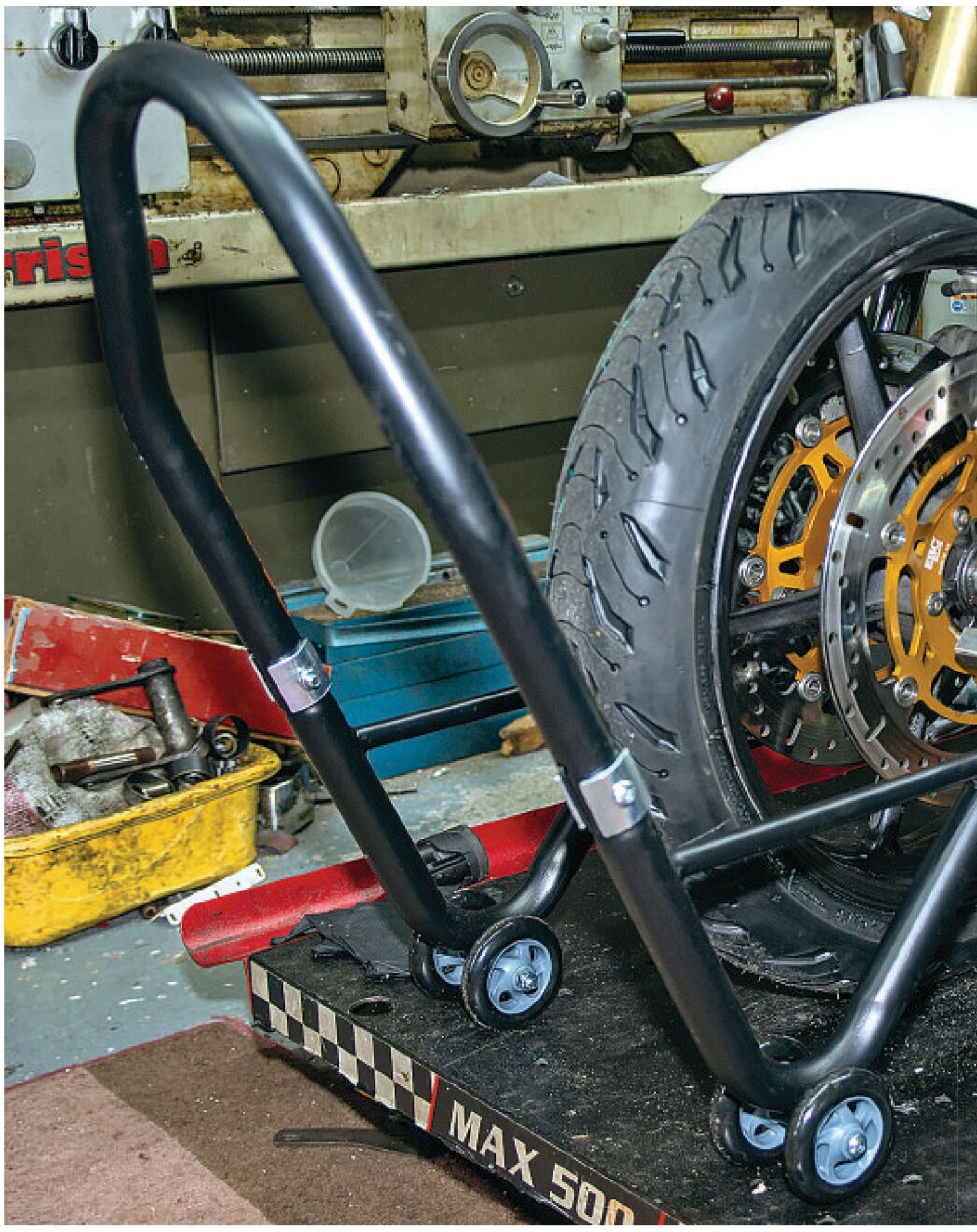
Well-respected Italian professional tool manufacturer Beta Tools contacted us at CMM and asked if we would like to try some of their new range of paddock stands. Now, Beta Tools are a manufacturer of professional tools and I already use one of their roll cabinets in my workshop, which in my opinion is very much on a par with my olde-skool Snap-On roll cab that I also have, and that really is a serious compliment.

I was a tad concerned by the fact that the Beta Stands came as flat-pack for the end user to assemble themselves. What I really like about Bike-Lift stands is that they are made in one piece of heavy-duty tubing ready to use, though as a retailer they are a nightmare to store and post out.

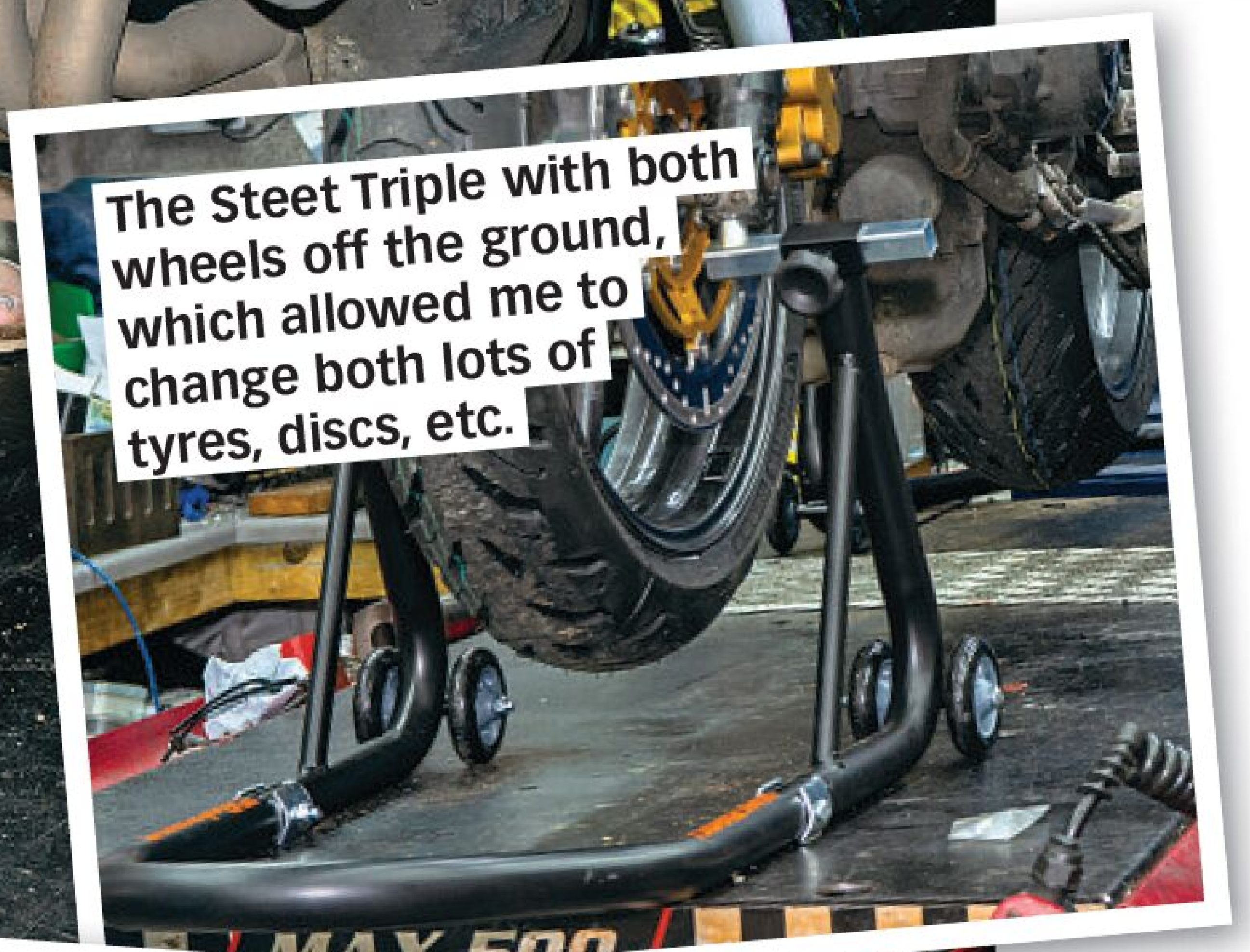
I assembled the first Beta stand as per the somewhat basic instructions and was very pleased with how sturdy the stand was. Because many old classic bikes were not designed to be used with paddock stands, they had no infrastructure built into the swingarms for use with these new-fangled stands, so the stands can be supplied with suitable adapters for either swingarms that come with bobbins or ones that don't. The Beta 3040/C came with both, which was very much in its favour. Even Bike-Lift stands aren't great with the non-bobbin adapters, having a slight tendency to move under the weight of a heavier bike. The Beta 3040/C showed no sign of this when I lifted SWMBO's Z900RS, which impressed me immensely.

I have a Street Triple in for some surgery including new brakes and tyres, so this was an opportunity to test both the front and rear paddock stands. I used the rear one with the bobbin adapters. It was absolutely perfect and behaved every bit as well as it's Bike-Lift counterpart.

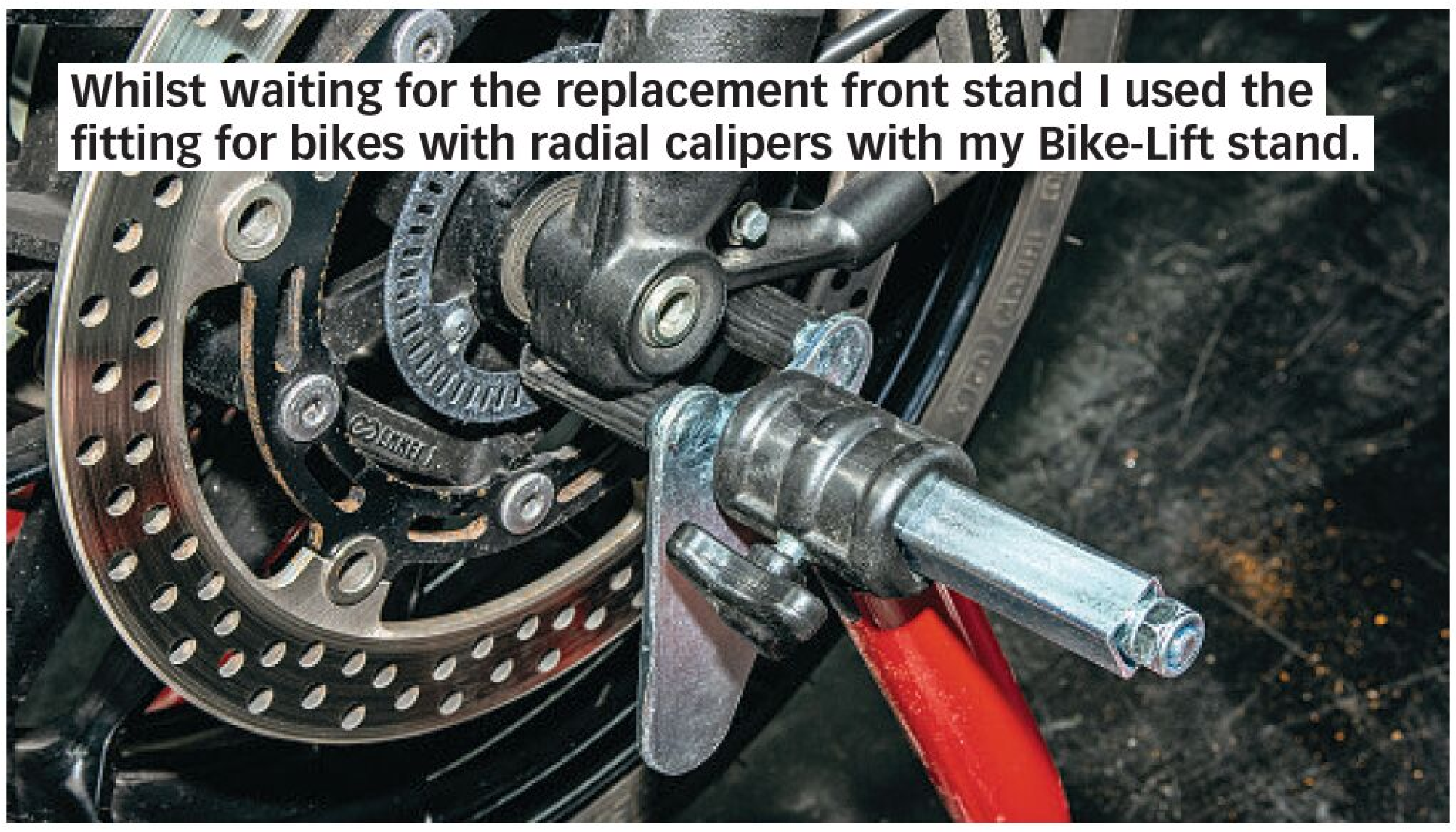
The first front one I had tried previously was very wobbly and I was nervous about using it. The



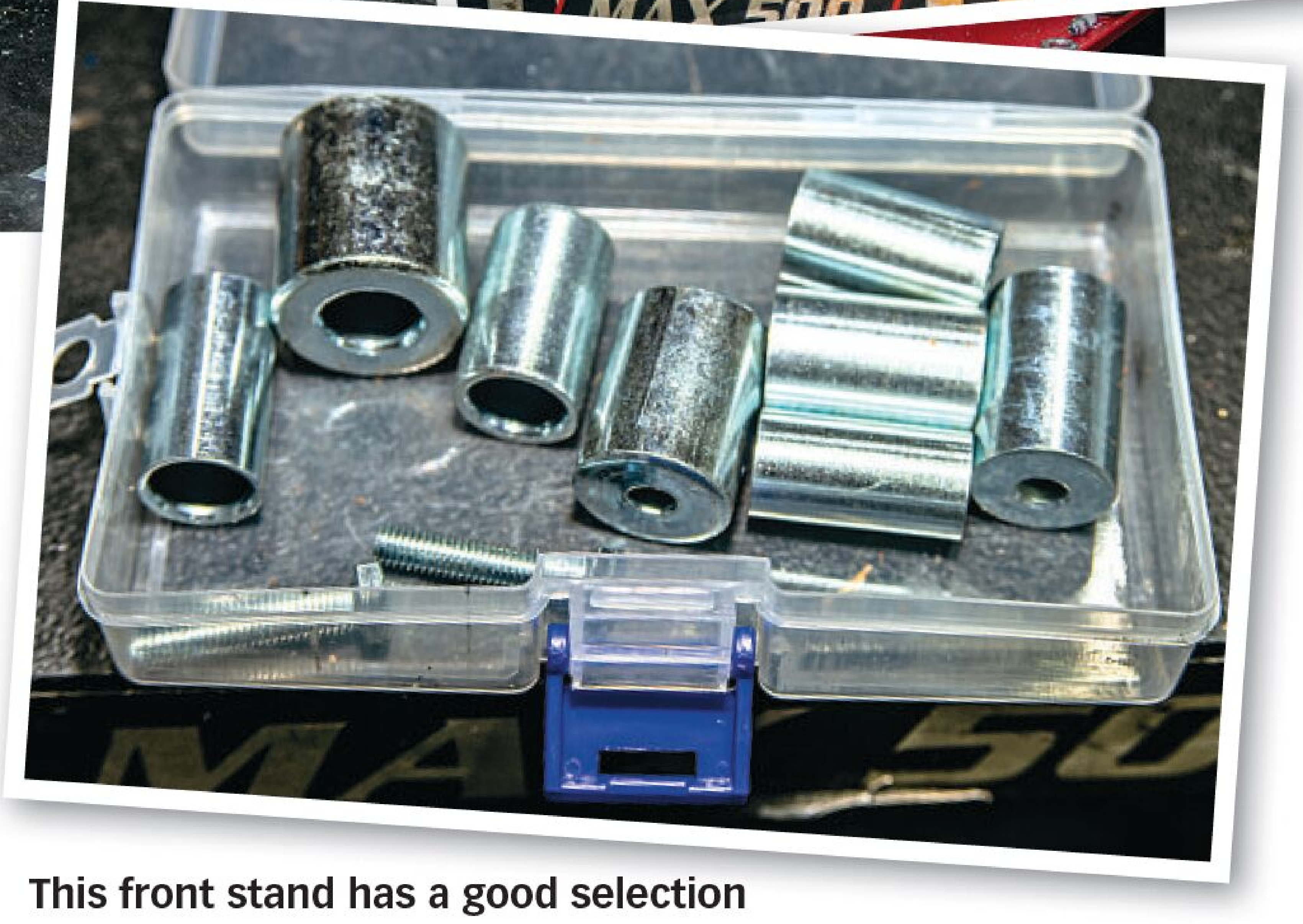
BELOW: Going from this point to fully up is a scary thing to do and requires great care.



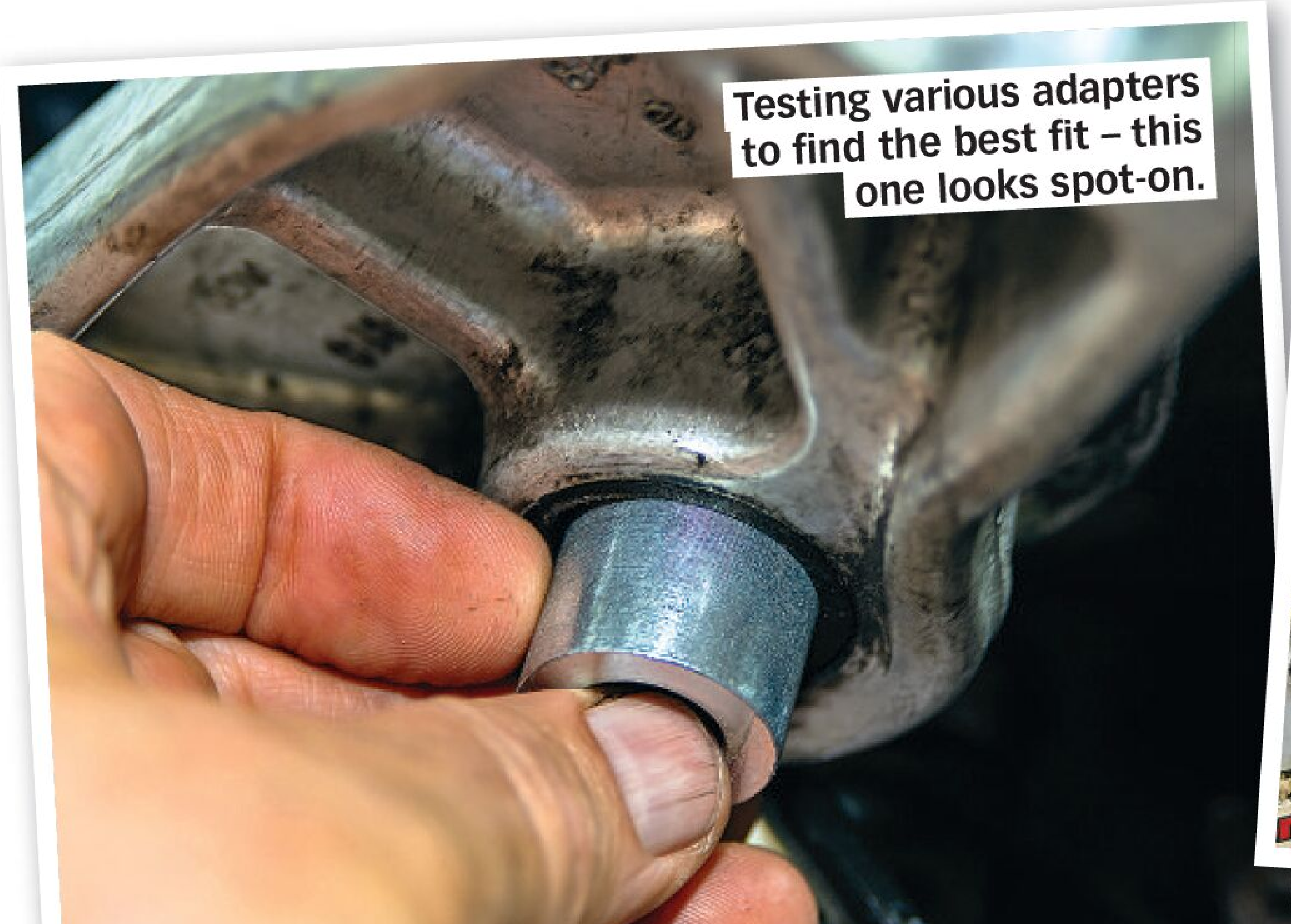
The Steet Triple with both wheels off the ground, which allowed me to change both lots of tyres, discs, etc.

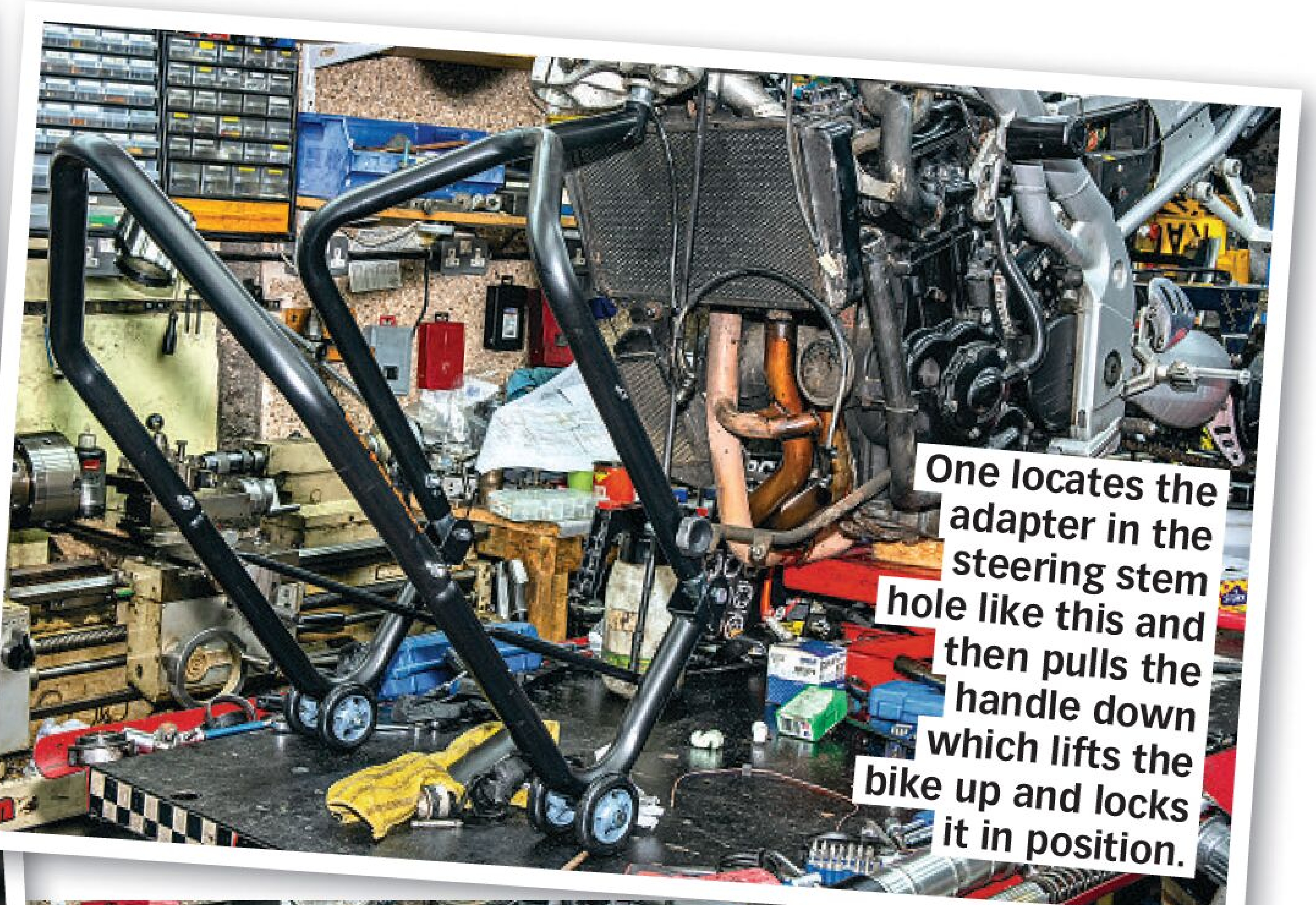


Whilst waiting for the replacement front stand I used the fitting for bikes with radial calipers with my Bike-Lift stand.

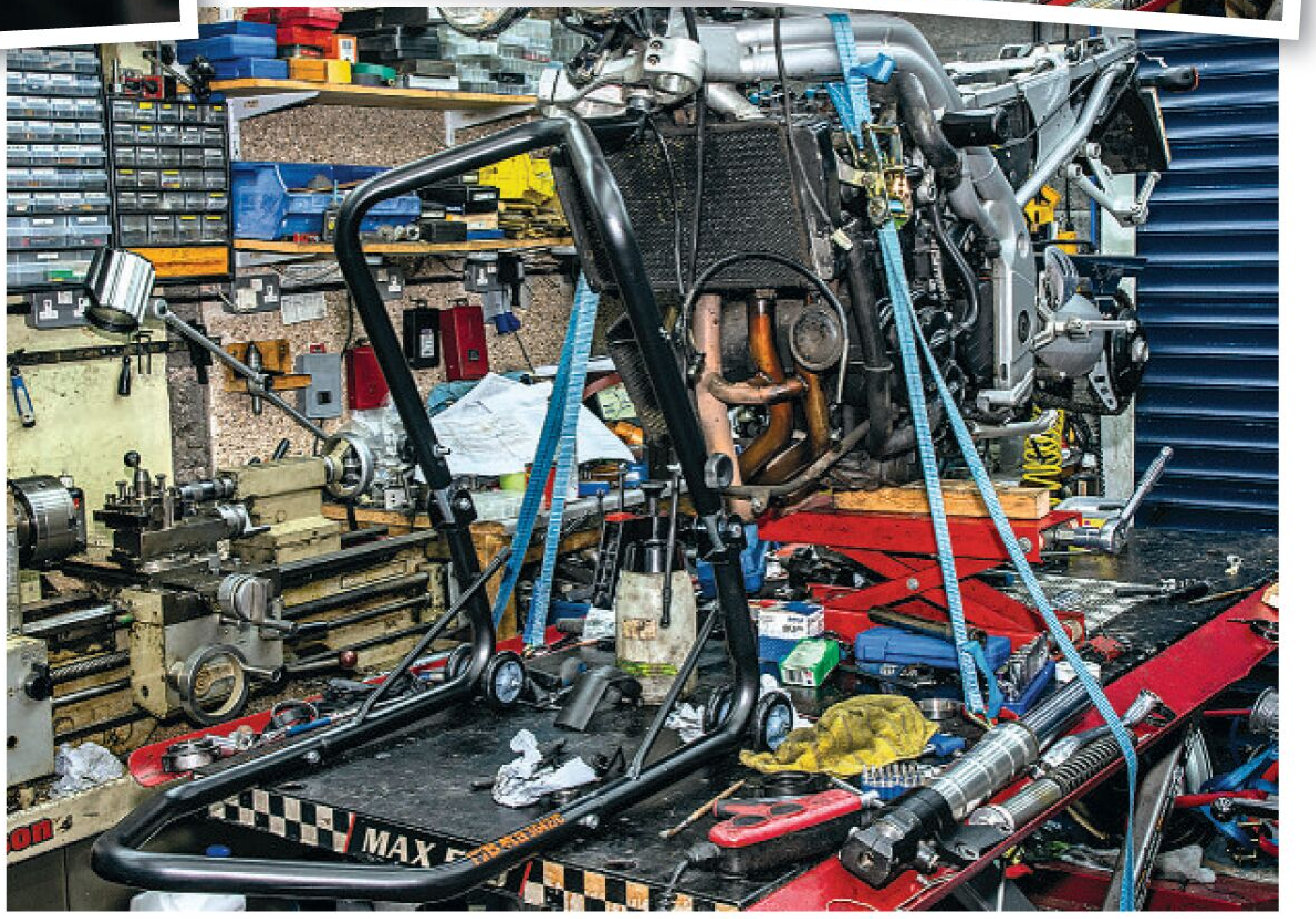


This front stand has a good selection of adapters to match the vast majority, if not all of the steering stems found on bikes.


Testing various adapters to find the best fit – this one looks spot-on.


One locates the adapter in the steering stem hole like this and then pulls the handle down which lifts the bike up and locks it in position.

Securing the selected adapter to the stand head with a screw.



problem stemmed from the joint that allowed the stand to be flat-packed. I contacted Beta and told them of my concerns, so they sent me another to try, assuming that the first had slipped past quality control.

This was better, but I had to do up the nuts and bolts so tightly that I feared that they may break or the threads strip to allow the stand to be used. Like the rear, the front stand comes with two adapters for different fork types. Most front stands have a protrusion at the top of a taper that locates in the clearance hole in the bottle of the fork leg that is there to allow the fettler access to the damper road bolt. In all honesty, I have never been a massive fan of this type of stand as it is very scary lifting the bike on them as they have a tendency to slip out. NEVER try and use one without a stand holding the bike vertical at the rear. Once up on these stands they are great as you can pull both wheels out and strip the loads off the bike. They are popular in race paddocks as you can fit tyre warmers to both wheels at the same time.

The next front stand I tried from Beta Tools is nothing short of brilliant and whilst I do have a DIY version of it that I have owned since Stonehenge had a roof on it, this one is far better.

Most bikes have a hollow tube through the steering head stem and this stand utilises this to support the motorcycle from the steering head, allowing one to strip the entire end off save the yokes. This is particularly useful when changing fork seals, when one needs to drop the forks out. I gave this a good workout, together with one of my scissor jacks when I needed to drop out the forks, brakes, wheels and the entire rear suspension out of my Speed Triple.

ABOVE: **I was able to hold my Speed Triple with no front forks whilst I took out the swingarm.**

This stand also came in kit form with some rather perfunctory instructions on how to build it up. It wasn't rocket science and to be fair if you have the skills to use it then you shouldn't have a problem assembling it.

It came with a really good selection of adapters of differing sizes to fit a huge range of bikes, far more than my previous stand. One simply selects adapters from the supplied plastic case and using trial and error, offering them up to the steering stem's hole to achieve the best fit and then screw the selected adapter to the stand. This is then pushed into the steering head stem and the handle pushed down which raises the front of the bike up and locks with the handle fully on the deck. I had my 955i Speed Triple on this stand for quite a while during which I removed the entire rear end including the swingarm, and was very impressed with the solidity of the set up.

As far as I can ascertain, Beta Tools currently don't have a dealer in the UK who actually holds stock of these stands, but if you go on their website (https://www.beta-tools.com/en/) you will find that they have systems in place to find your local dealer who will be able to get your stands in from Italy in two to three weeks. *cmm*

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This month, there are six fantastic prizes up for grabs! As well as our usual goodies – represented this month by a **Weise Tempest Thermal One-Piece Over Suit** worth £139.99 – we have an **MTR Vintage retro crash helmet** worth £130, a **ComfortAir Seat Cushion** worth £69.99, a cool **Tamiya kit**, a **Bridgestone Oxford Products Oximiser 3X** worth £69.99 and **MotoClean goodies** worth £59. That makes a combined worth of more than £500!

Here are our prizes for YOU in this November issue of CMM…

MTR the passion

An MTR Vintage retro crash helmet worth £130. This is a retro full-face motorcycle helmet from the Louis Moto brand MTR. You've got a fibre-glass helmet, the classic double-D fastener and a comfort lining. Go to **www.louis-moto.co.uk** for more info.

A model kit from Tamiya worth £30-50. If you want to build your own classic in miniature, you can't find a better model kit than Tamiya, which are imported into the UK by **www.hobbyco.net**

A MotoClean bundle worth £59: Gel Bike Wash (£14.99), Brake Cleaner, £9.99, Chain Lube (£11.99), Maintenance Spray (£9.99), Apparel Care (£11.99). **www.motoclean.co.uk**

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1990 Suzuki *RGV250 L*

PICS: GARY D CHAPMAN/BERTIE SIMMONDS ARCHIVE

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On the brakes, much improved once I fitted sintered pads.

WORDS: JEFF WARE PICS: HEATHER WARE

Project Honda CBR900RR FireBlade 'Urban Tiger' Part 2

Bye of the Tiger

Finally owning my dream Urban Tiger Fireblade was incredible, but living with it, loving it, and then saying goodbye was a bittersweet journey…

Some bikes define an era. Others define a rider. For me, my 1995 Honda CBR900RR 'Urban Tiger' FireBlade was both.

After finding and buying the bike as a 40th birthday present from my wife, finally I'd ticked off a teenage dream three decades in the making. But buying a bike is one thing. Restoring it, living with it, and eventually letting it go – that's a whole other journey. And sometimes a painful one, but bear with me…

After that first very thorough service – new Avon tyres; oil and filter change; DNA air-filter; fresh plugs; valve clearance check; carb clean; wheel bearings; brake pads; fork seals; greased pivots; new battery; and fitting the hard-won OEM exhaust from Tasmania, the Blade was running beautifully. But it wasn't immaculate. More of a neat, honest, daily rider than a show bike. So, while it didn't gleam like a new machine, it carried the scars of its age with dignity, so to speak.

For months afterwards, I found any excuse I could to ride the Blade. I had some amazing long-term press bikes in the shed at the time – a brand-new BMW S1000RR, a Yamaha WR250R, a Ninja 400 – yet I kept reaching for the Honda keys. There was just something about the 'Blade.

On the road, every ride felt like stepping

Not a bad lean angle for the old beast; the Avon 3D Ultra Sport are fantastic.

back into the golden era of superbikes. The FireBlade's throttle response was immediate yet manageable, the CV carbs giving it a smoothness modern EFI bikes often lack. The engine pulled strongly from anywhere in the rev-range. Even with 60,000km on the clock, it felt fresh.

One of my favourite features of the 'Blade was its practicality. The hinged pillion seat could hide a six-pack of that sweet amber ale (for post-ride hydration, of course). The seats themselves were surprisingly comfy compared to modern superbikes. I fitted a Ventura luggage rack for touring, and with the taller screen in place, long freeway runs were a breeze. I even commuted into the city many times – lane splitting on a FireBlade never gets old, especially when the commuters realise they've just been overtaken by a 30-year-old classic that looks brand-new.

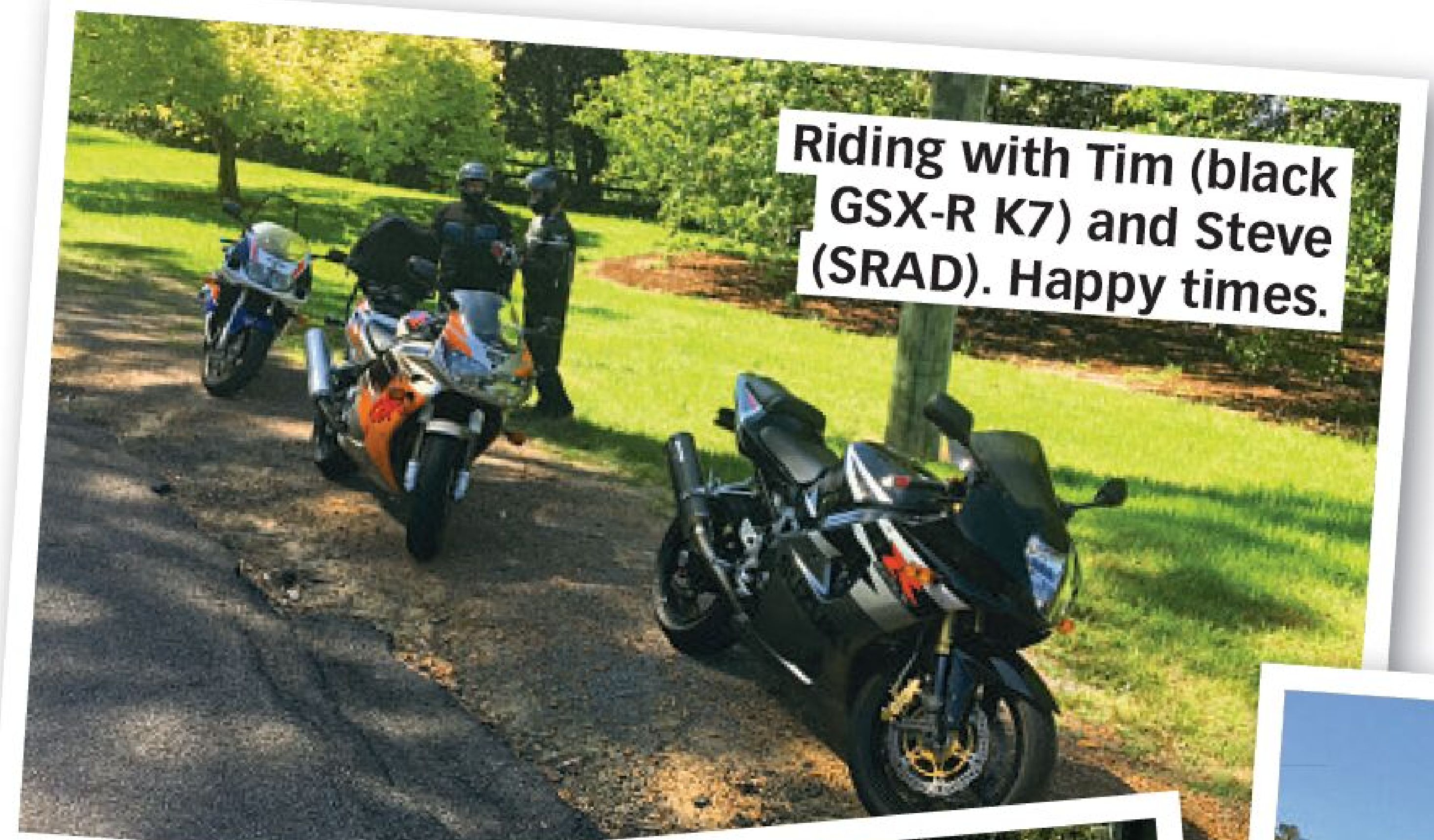
Compared to modern sports-bikes, the FireBlade felt like a lounge chair. The big, wide, soft seat, broad tank, and relatively high clip-ons made it feel roomy and natural. The suspension, while basic by modern standards, was plush enough to soak up bumps yet firm enough to carve corners. It had that 1990s feel – a twitchy front-end with bugger-all feedback and fast steering. But I could ride it for hours on end without aches, something I can't say about most modern litre bikes.

The CBR really grew on me, and we became close mates. I had many, many great rides: long commutes into the city and back in rain, hail or shine; fun weekend blasts exploring the Central Coast hinterland where I live; early morning runs up the Old Road for coffee and bike banter; and loads of track days where I had a ridiculous amount of fun carving up much more modern and expensive bikes.

At Sydney Motorsport Park, the 'Blade felt right at home. Sure, it wasn't as brutally fast as modern superbikes, but it made up for that with confidence-inspiring handling and user-friendly power delivery.

I once had an actual instructor follow me, and then he came up to me in the pits and said I needed some training on my body position (I have a very olde-skool riding style from the 1990s). He did not realise I had a lap record there not that long ago, that I had some 'racing history', or even who I was in old bike journalism circles. I just said thanks… Next session, I passed him on the outside of Corporate Hill, an off-camber sweeper, sideways, laying a big black line. It was a

Pushing that front 16-incher is always a bit of a gamble; vague is the word that springs to mind.


Riding with Tim (black GSX-R K7) and Steve (SRAD). Happy times.

That big, unmistakeable fuel tank.

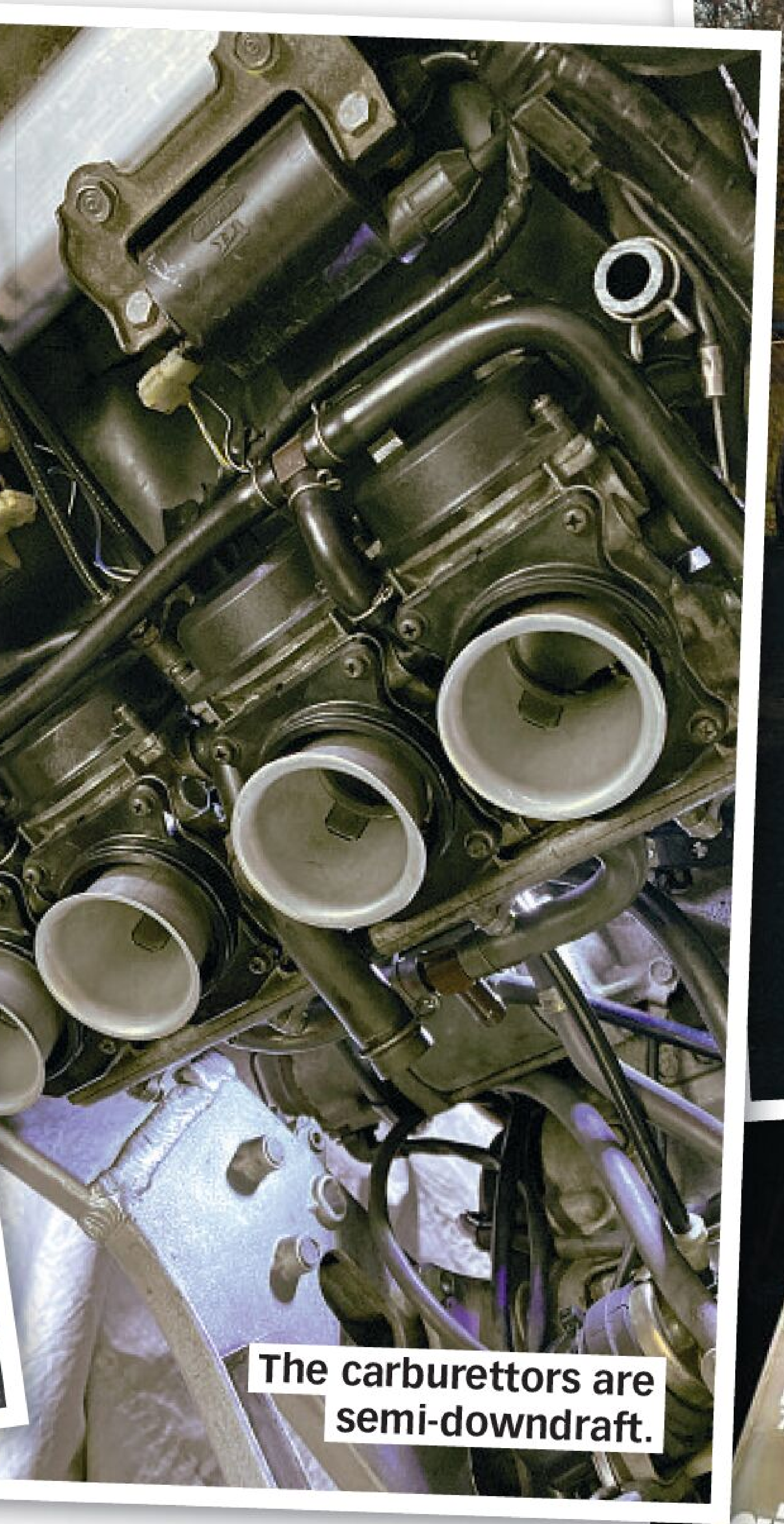
Last night in the garage, having a beer and admiring the Blade before it got picked up.

The FireBlade was genuinely a much-loved family member.

My last ride before it went to the new owner, and it was running its best.

Fresh spark plugs helped things smoothen out.

Rebuilding the CV carburettors.


The carburettors are semi-downdraft.

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I still have this copy of PB from 1994! It is over 30 years old and I still remember buying it.

satisfying message from the old FireBlade!

On the brakes, the old Nissins weren't spectacular, lacking initial bite and ultimate power compared to more modern (say 20 year-old) radial set ups, but with sintered pads they performed decently. I'll never forget the feeling of passing riders half my age on R1s and ZX-10Rs, only to see them stare at my Urban Tiger in pit lane with confused admiration. Getting overtaken by 600s (yes, they are faster these days) on the straight sucks, though!

As the kilometres rolled on, a few small issues cropped up. The fuelling became inconsistent, with flat spots and fuel starvation under hard acceleration. I rebuilt the carbs properly this time, installing a new jet kit, and decided to remove the fuel-pump in favour of gravity feed. This solved some of the issues with the semi-downdraft CV carburettors, but high rpm running on a low tank still gave occasional fuel starvation. In the end, I simply kept the tank topped up and got on with riding.

Other tweaks included a new chain and sprockets (kept to standard gearing), and a Powerbronze clear plastic headlight protector to keep the expensive OEM multi-reflector lens safe from stone chips. Each improvement made the FireBlade more usable and enjoyable. It became my go-to ride, whether I was heading to the city for meetings, down the coast for a photoshoot, or up to Mount White for a dawn coffee before the roads filled with Sunday warriors.

My mate Simon, who inspired me to own a Tiger FireBlade in the mid-1990s.

He was a stunt rider at the time on the FireBlade.

One weekend summed up the versatility of the Urban Tiger perfectly. I rode it down to Sydney Motorsport Park, parked it in the pits, raced in the Ninja Cup class of the Australian Superbike Championship for Kawasaki, taking a second place, then rode the FireBlade home each evening after racing. Three days in a row. I remember the ASBK commentators having a laugh about it over the PA, pointing out the bloke racing for Kawasaki then heading off on his 20-year-old Honda. But deep down, I was proud. That FireBlade was my unicorn.

My love affair with the bike was in full swing. Every time I walked into the shed, I'd smile. That Tiger Stripe paint job, the chunky alloy frame, mega headlight, big two-piece seat – it just oozed 1990s superbike cool.

Then Covid hit. It was late March 2020, and the Prime Minister announced lockdowns on the news. Almost overnight, we were severely financially impacted. With four kids to feed and a business to save, sacrifices had to be made.

I sold a bunch of bikes to keep BikeReview.com.au afloat. The FireBlade, sadly, was one of them.

Watching it leave was devastating. As Carl rode it up the street, I felt tears welling. I walked back into the now half-empty shed, cracked a beer, and sat there staring at the empty spot where the Blade had lived. It felt like I'd lost a part of myself, like my teenage dream had been snatched away just as it was coming true.

But before he left, Carl made me a promise: if he ever decided to sell the FireBlade, he would call me first before advertising it. That promise gave me a sliver of hope. Perhaps this wasn't the end. Perhaps it was just a pause in the story.

Next time, we pick up the tale a few years later, when fate – and Carl – brought the Urban Tiger back into my life. But she wasn't quite in the condition I sold her in! *cmm*

Arriving at the track, ready to race for Kawasaki!

The race leathers are crammed into the Ventura bag.

HONDA
CBR
LMQ 22

Lapping The Farm, a 6km, 22 corner private track a mate of mine used to own. It was not far from my place and I used it for a decade doing a lot of testing with Wayne Gardner.

Again, at The Farm, enjoying a day on the Blade...

One day, Gramps will ride this but with three cylinders! Huzzah!

WORDS AND PICS: PIP HIGHAM

Project Suzuki Trinvader Part 6

Boingy bits!

What's the secret to perfectly suspended front and rear-ends? Well, let's ask our expert: Pip Higham!

What's the best bit about riding your bike? The noise? That tug on the bars when you ring down for 'full ahead, both'?

Well, yup, I get that, but the sensation that flies under the radar is how it 'feels' and how compliant the suspension is, because if it kicks you up the arse over every little bump in the road or pitches you off line for no reason on your favourite corner you'll get cheesed off mighty quick! Modern suspension is amazing but even old clunkers can get a leg up with a few tweaks and a bit of work.

Here's my quick 'How To' guide for a sweeter ride, so let's start at the front. With the whole shebang stripped and cleaned, it's essential to check whether the fork stanchions (the hefty tubes, that is) are straight. They need to be spot-on so check them by rolling them on a flat surface, or better still, on a pair of vee blocks with a clock gauge.

If they are straight, there are two ways to go: either polish the existing or have them ground, hard-chromed and then ground back to size by a specialist. I've used A. M. Philpots in the past and they did an amazing job... faultless. Apart from looking better, they won't chew up fork seals in double-quick time and the forks will be smoother and less prone to 'stiction', the curse of all telescopic forks.

It's a good time to check for gouged and worn bushes and general wear and tear of any of the fork components. My route now is a bit unconventional: I build up one fork leg with a known quantity of oil but without the spring. Now assemble this in the fork clamps and work the fork through the full range of movement a few times. It sounds a bit wacky but it's very easy to vary the weight and quantity of oil to create a comfortable degree of damping. It's hard to quantify and everyone is different but give it a try, you might like it.

Now you can set both legs up identically (check them both) and assemble them in the yokes. Now it all gets a bit strange, but stick with me, as most bikes rely on the mudguard, or a steel reinforcement if it's a plastic guard, to firm up the

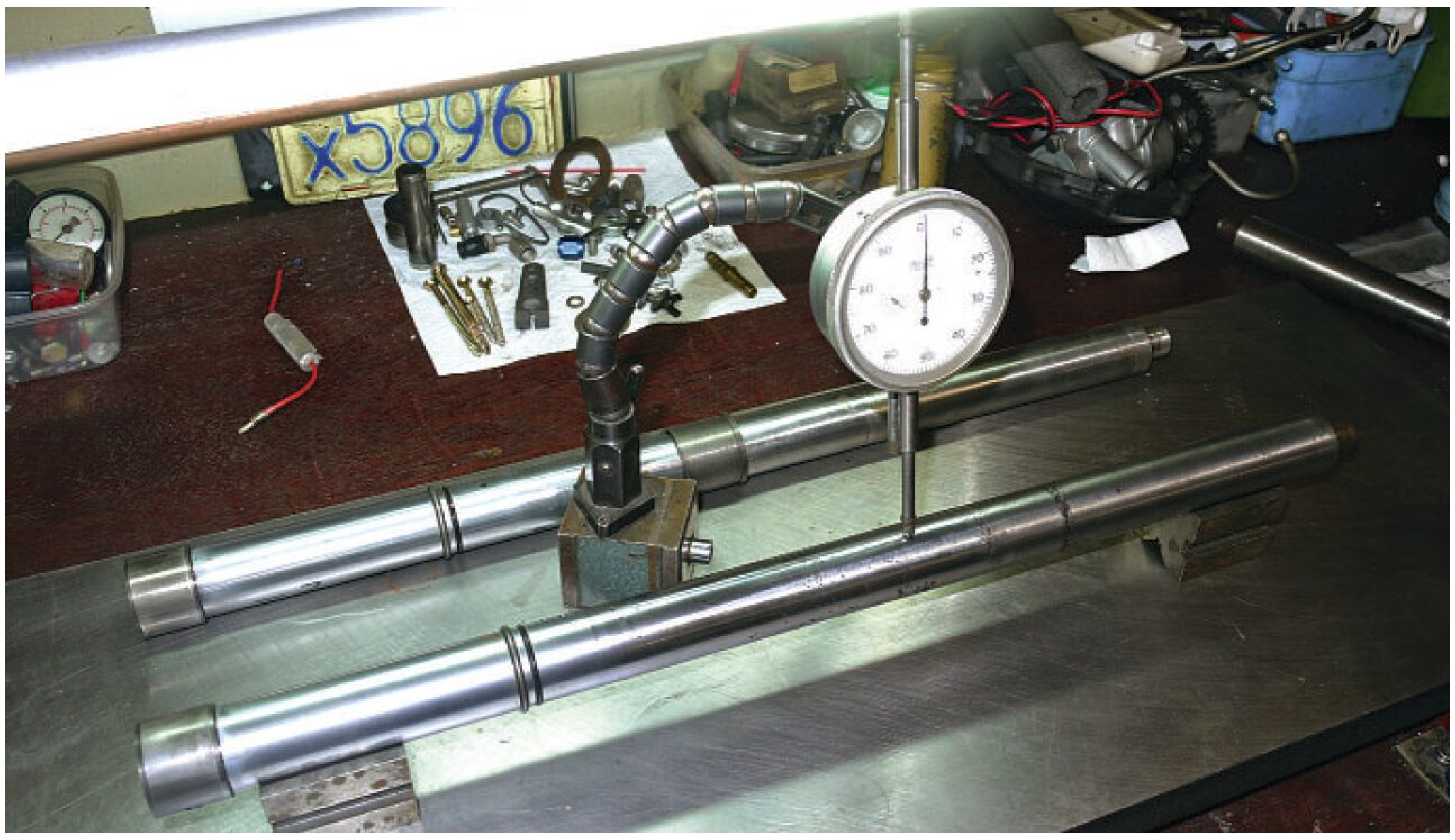
Exquisite early Ducati fork leg, very simple and very effective, great support for the front axle, desirable for good handling.

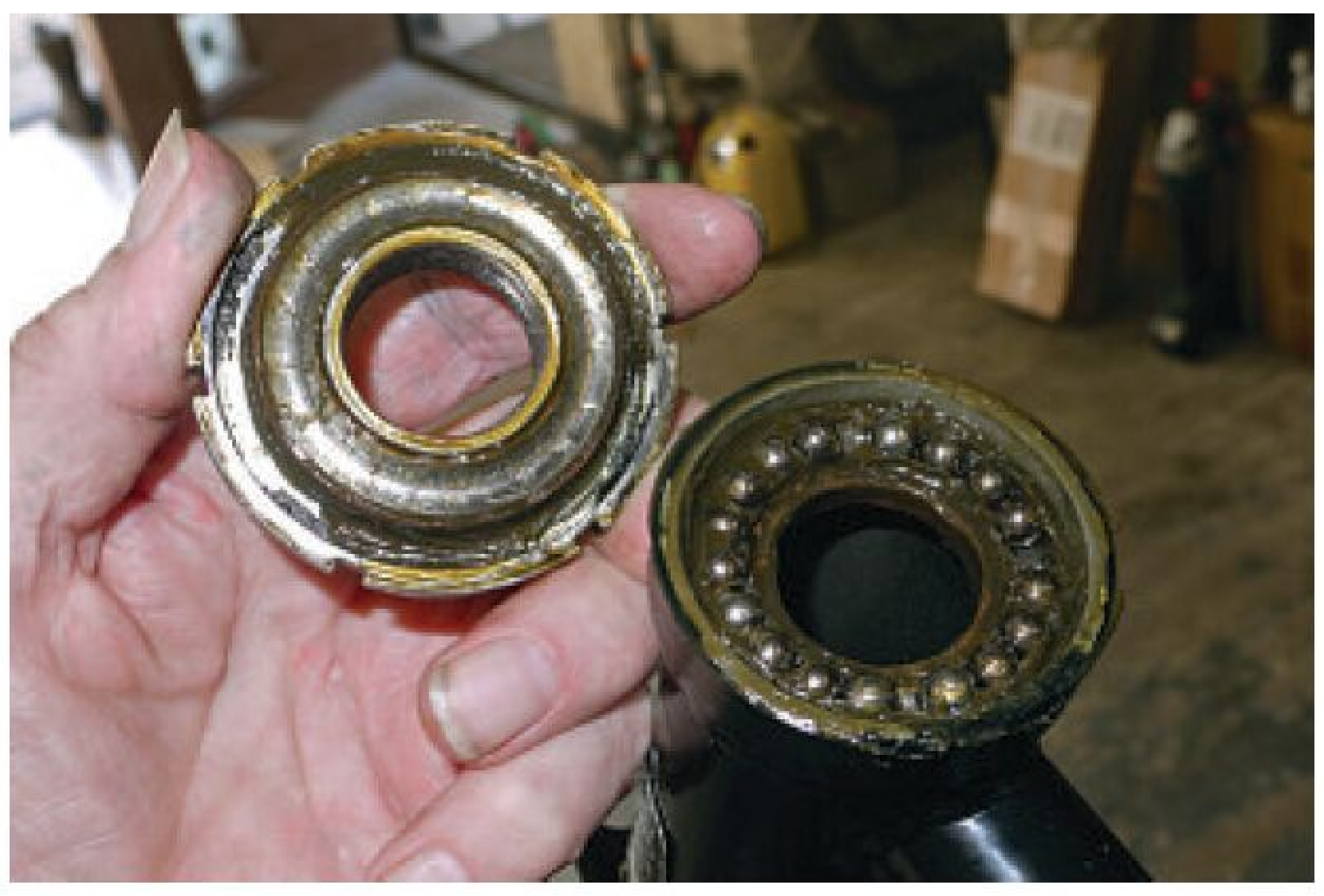
A mix of T200 and Chinese fork bits. I considered modifying the cheap copies to fit in the Trinvader… Nah!

front-end, essential in my opinion. But only if the mudguard fits perfectly. If fitting the mudguard requires any pressure to install the bolts, or if the brackets do not fit the forks correctly (possibly because the mudguard has been traumatised in a previous life), then there will be pressure exerted on the fork legs. This is bad and will hugely alter the behaviour of the forks, so spend time tweaking the mudguard brackets, all of them, mind, for a flawless fit.

It's the same argument with the front wheel. The spindle must be absolutely straight and tightening up the spindle must not tweak or twist the fork legs. If you do all the above, you won't believe the feel of your front-end… it's free and it works. Trust me, I'm a doctor!

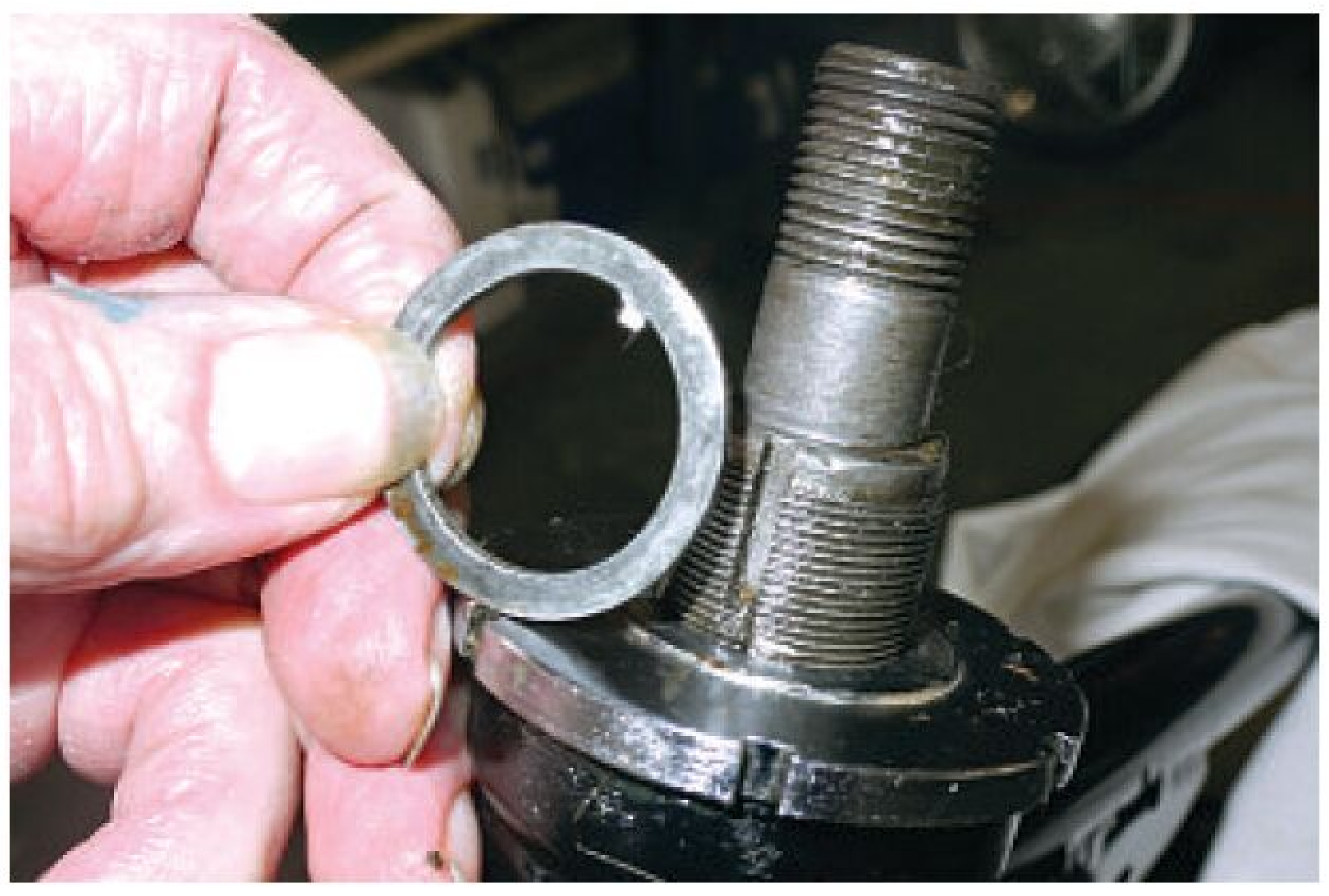
It's always worth a peek at the steering-head bearings. I've seen many a cock-up in this unseen area, from dry bearings to errant balls lost up the headstock: 'I wondered why it felt funny!' Well, now you know. If you have either taper rollers or 'cup and cone' bearings, the protocol is

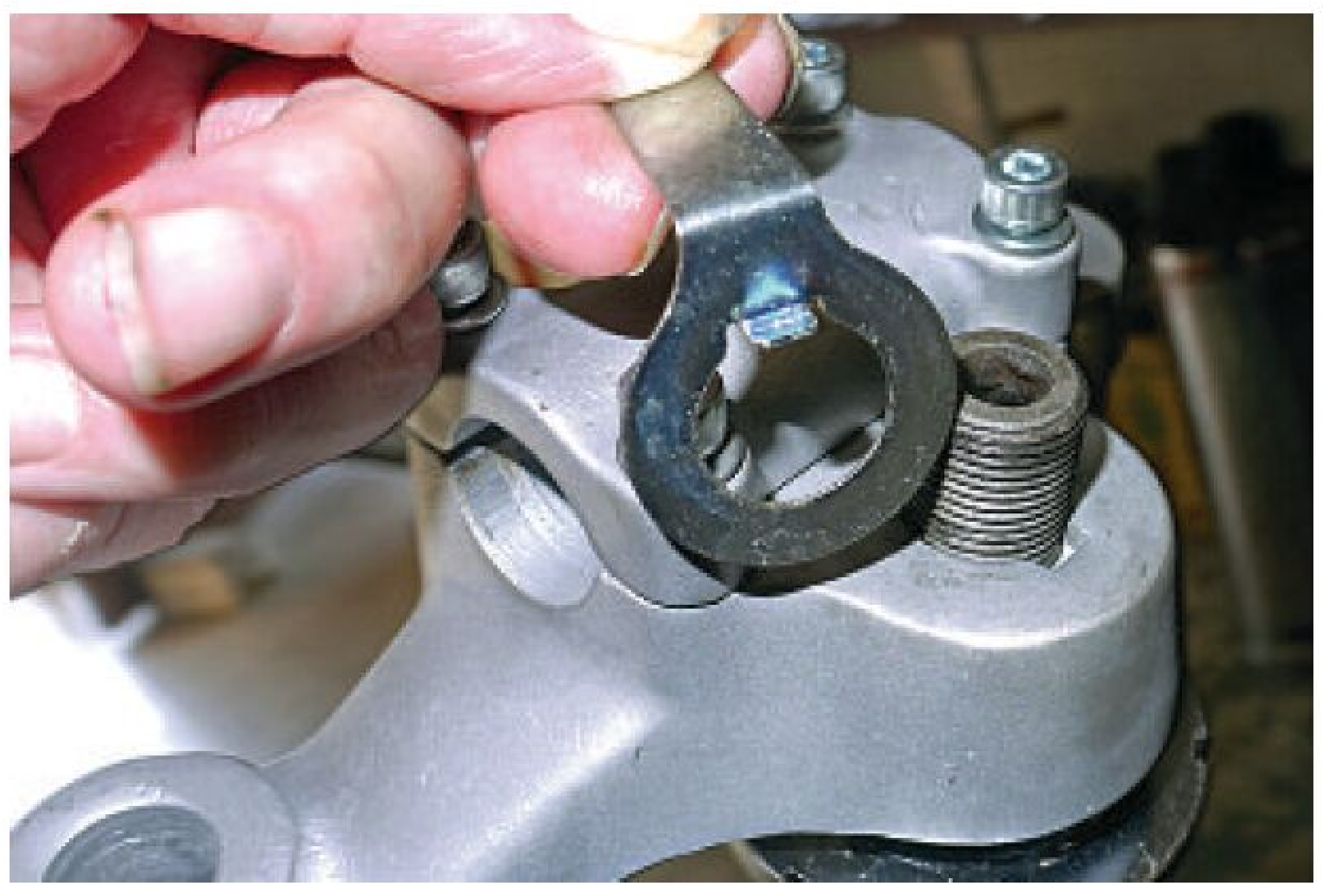

Checking for straight on the jig of truth! It don't lie, and they're always bent!


Top bearings, greased up ready to assemble. There should always be a gap twixt your balls. If they are crowded the headset will bind up.

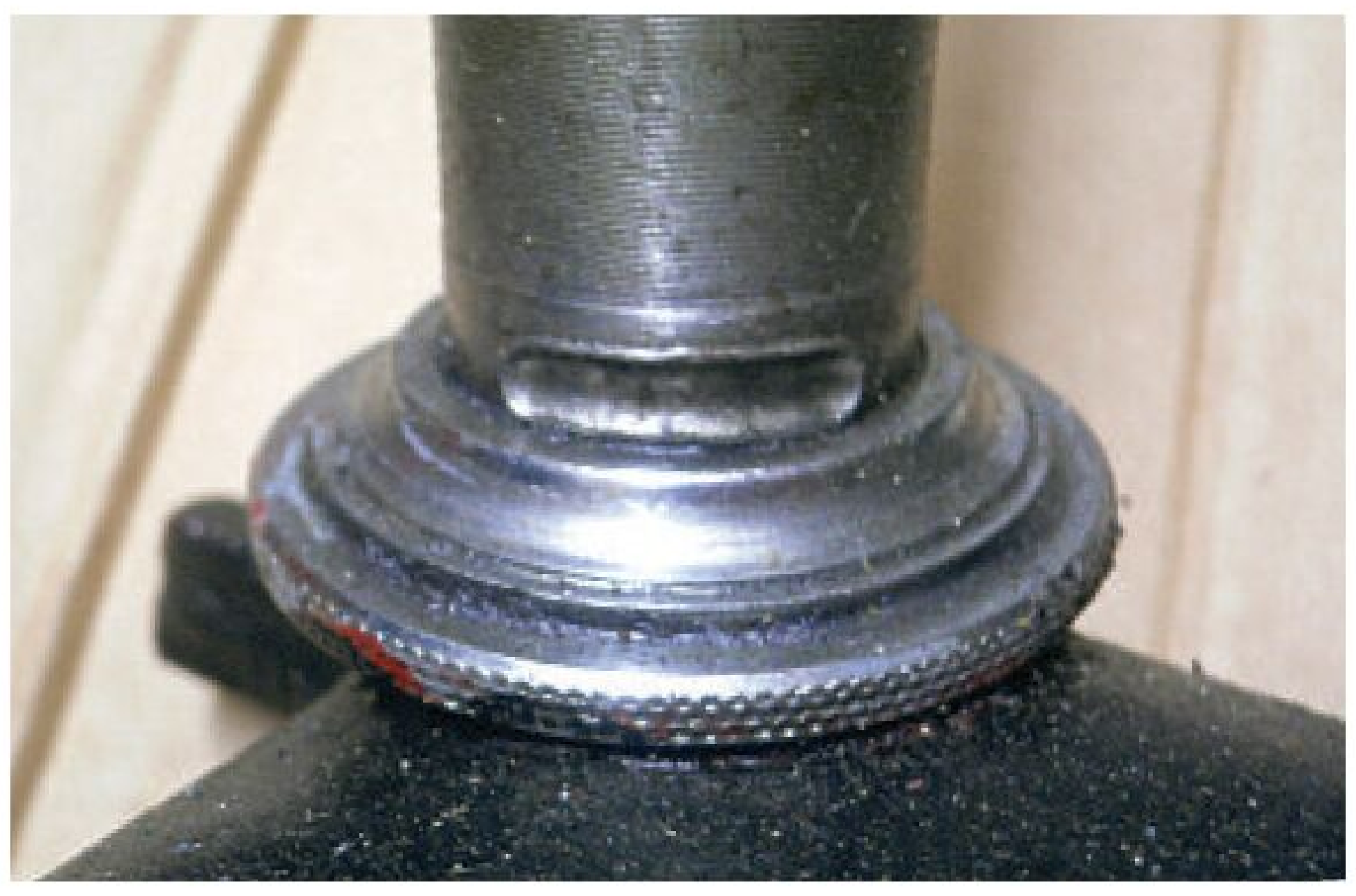
Bottom set ready to go in… with care!

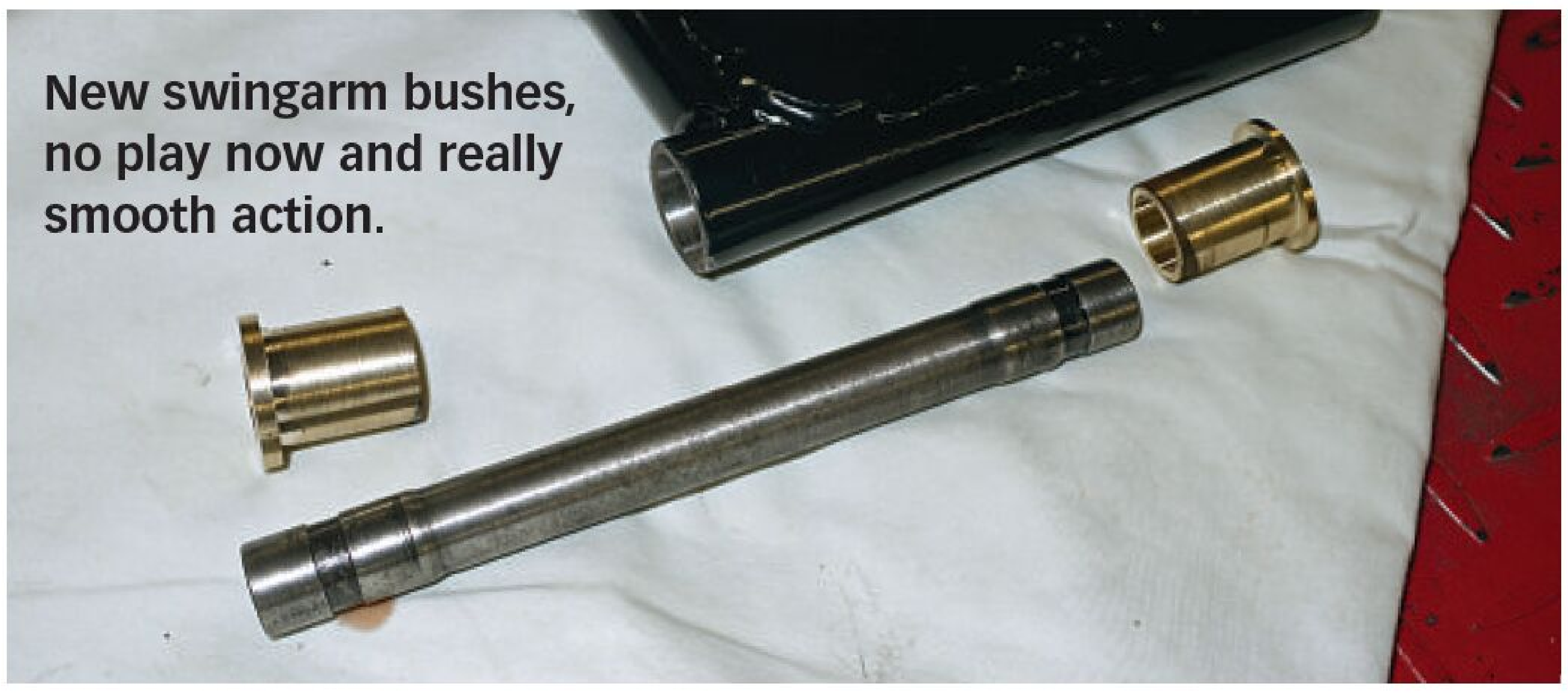
With the bottom yoke in I've secured it temporarily with a good tie wrap while I fit the top set. Jubbly!

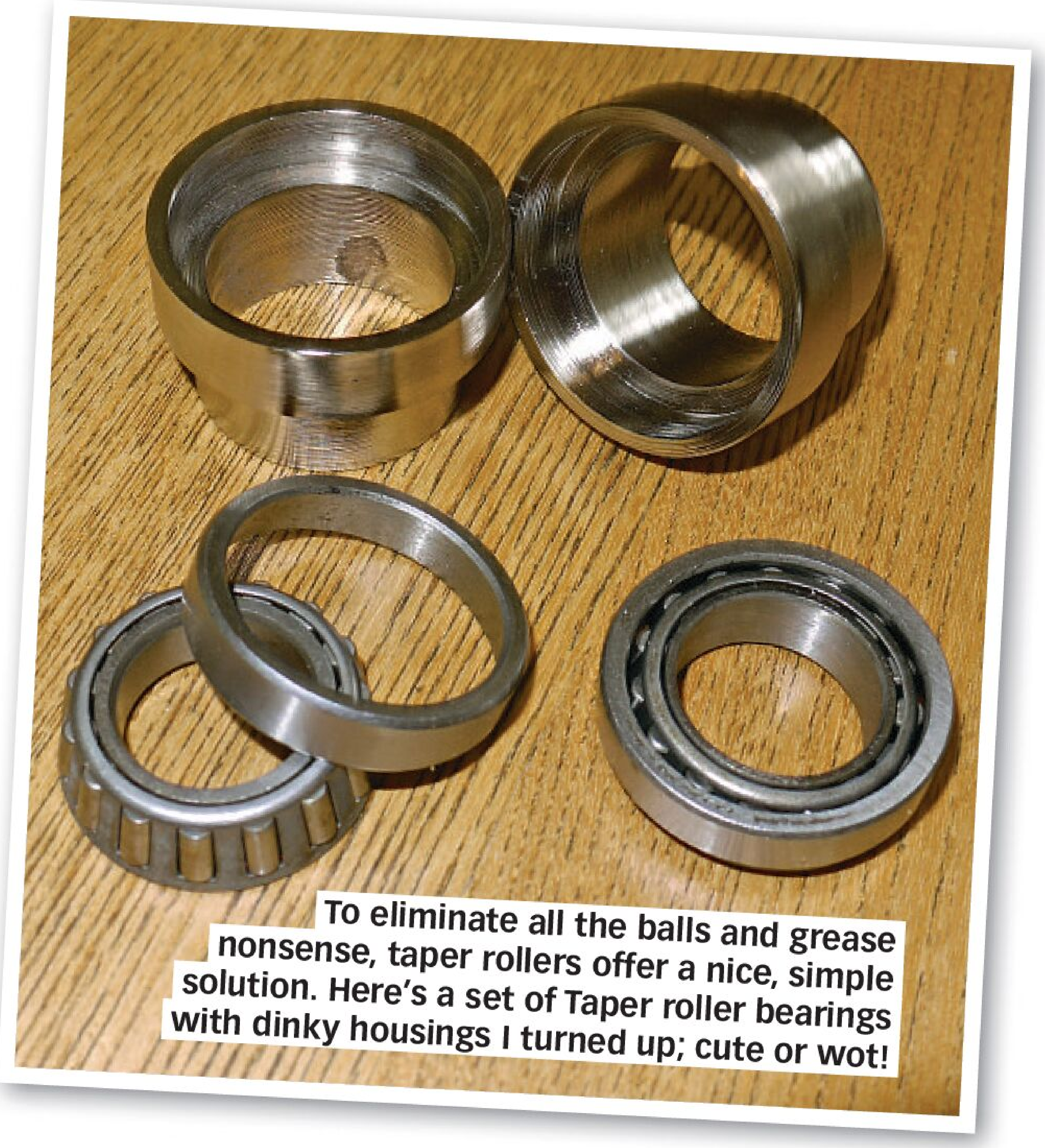

Typical Suzuki attention to detail: washer has an indent that fits into the headstock spindle… nice.


Similarly the steering damper detent spring is located on the headstock via the same slot.

Yokes assembled, ready for fork legs.


How not to fit steering head balls! And it looks like they were left in this state for quite a while, judging by the wear pattern, just slack! And lazy!


New swingarm bushes, no play now and really smooth action.


To eliminate all the balls and grease nonsense, taper rollers offer a nice, simple solution. Here's a set of Taper roller bearings with dinky housings I turned up; cute or wot!

just the same: well lubed and never, ever over-tightened! Easy, simple and quite rewarding.

With the sharp-end tamed and hopefully compliant and smooth, what can be done to help the back-end to behave itself, I hear you ask? As usual, take it all to bits and clean everything. It can be quite educational at this stage as there may be horrors... Like what? Well, apart from the occasional catastrophic rust damage to swingarms, particularly pressed steel ones (just chuck it right now), there may well be corroded and seized pivot bearings.

The next thing to inspect is the frame fixing where the main pivot fixes to the frame; a loose swingarm spindle can cause havoc here! Hint: Always set the spindle in place with the fixing nut on the opposite side to the chain run. That way the threaded part of the spindle won't be vulnerable to attack as it passes through the frame.

If there is excessive wear, and it is inevitably towards the front of the bike on the chain pull side, you have two options. The first is to weld up the damaged/worn section and then carefully fettle the weld. You'll need a keen eye and a very keen file for this task. I favour a parallel 'chain saw' file; a little patience and good light will get the job done in minutes. Of course, if the frame is worn then the spindle will be, too, and will need to be replaced.

The other possibility is a totally fresh swingarm with a larger diameter spindle. The one that springs to mind is the GS/GSX 750 to GSX 1100 swingarm. With a stepped drill and a bit of improvisation this is a great swop and you can end up with a funky aluminium GSX swingarm for little outlay. It's a winner!

Swingarm bushes, bearings and spacers must be mint. In the old days these would be press-fitted bronze bearings that needed to be line bored to very precise tolerances. Nowadays the designs are far better and frequently use needle roller bearings and hardened spacers which are a snap to change. Wemoto do a goodly range of these with lots of kits that make for an easy life... We like easy! You may well be shocked at the condition of the contents of your swingarm pivot, as grease nipples have all but disappeared, so corrosion frequently wreaks havoc in this much-neglected area: moisture, salt and neglect have a lot to answer for.

So, with the pivot sweet and sorted, the swingarm should move smoothly and with no rock or side-to-side movement. And now for the rhinoceros in the broom cupboard: the rear dampers. There are lots available, some good, some not so good... you pays yer money, etc. I've always liked Girling shocks, and since Hagon's took over the rights they have moved them on to another level and availability is on an almost bespoke level. Let's see, you have the choice of extended length; compressed length; end configuration (eyes or forked ends); bush diameter; cover configuration short, long, etc.; spring weight; length and finish (chrome or paint); and for a bit more wedge, there's the option of stainless!

The net result is a unit that outperforms OEM shocks at a great price, and yes, before you ask, I do pay for mine! Sure, the options are out there, but remember the old adage: 'Buy cheap, buy twice!' I'm in the middle of implementing all of the above tweaks. I've ordered shocks, replaced swingarm bushes and hope to finalise the forks very soon. With luck it'll handle as well as any other 55-year-old clunker! **cmm**

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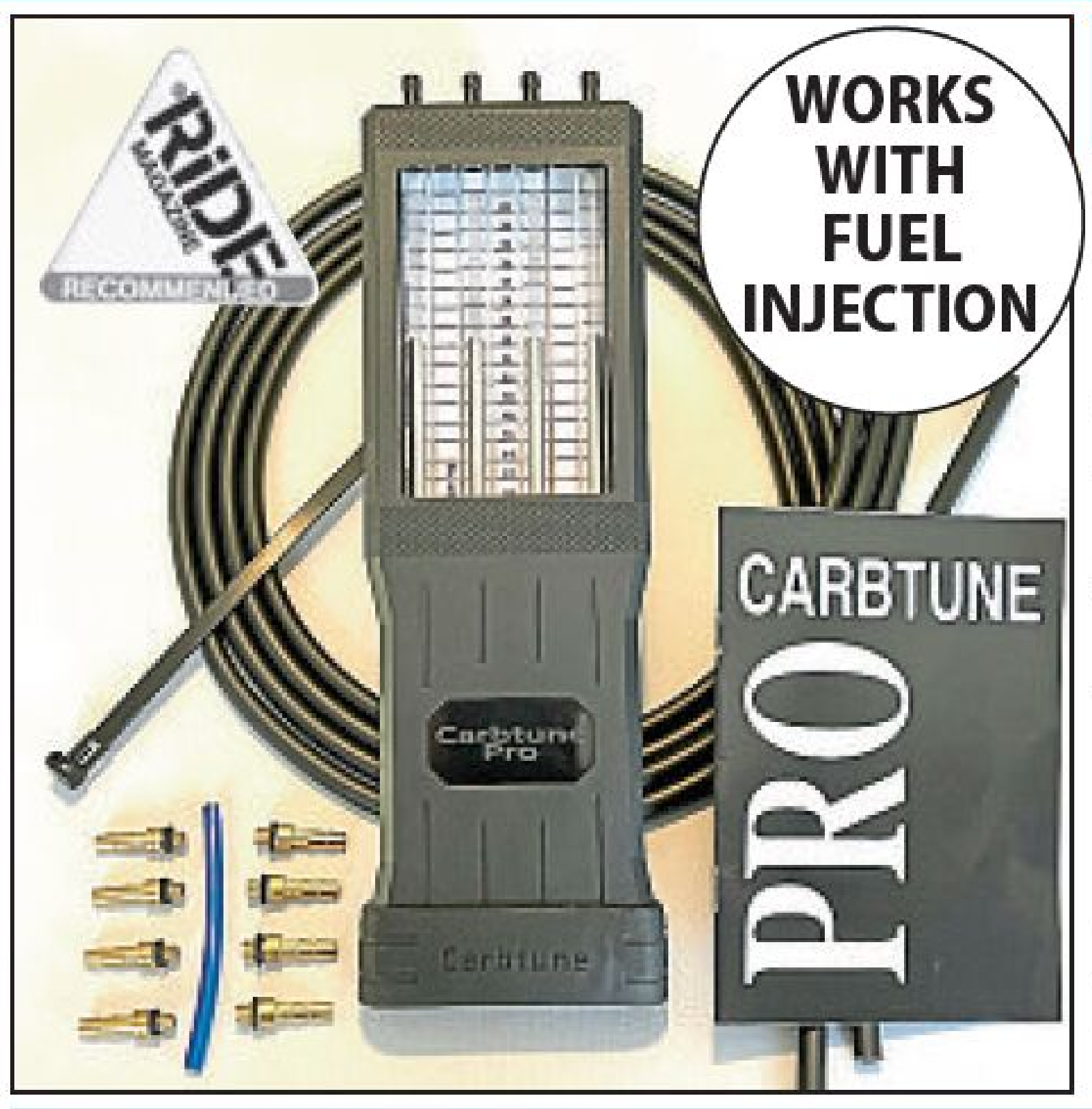

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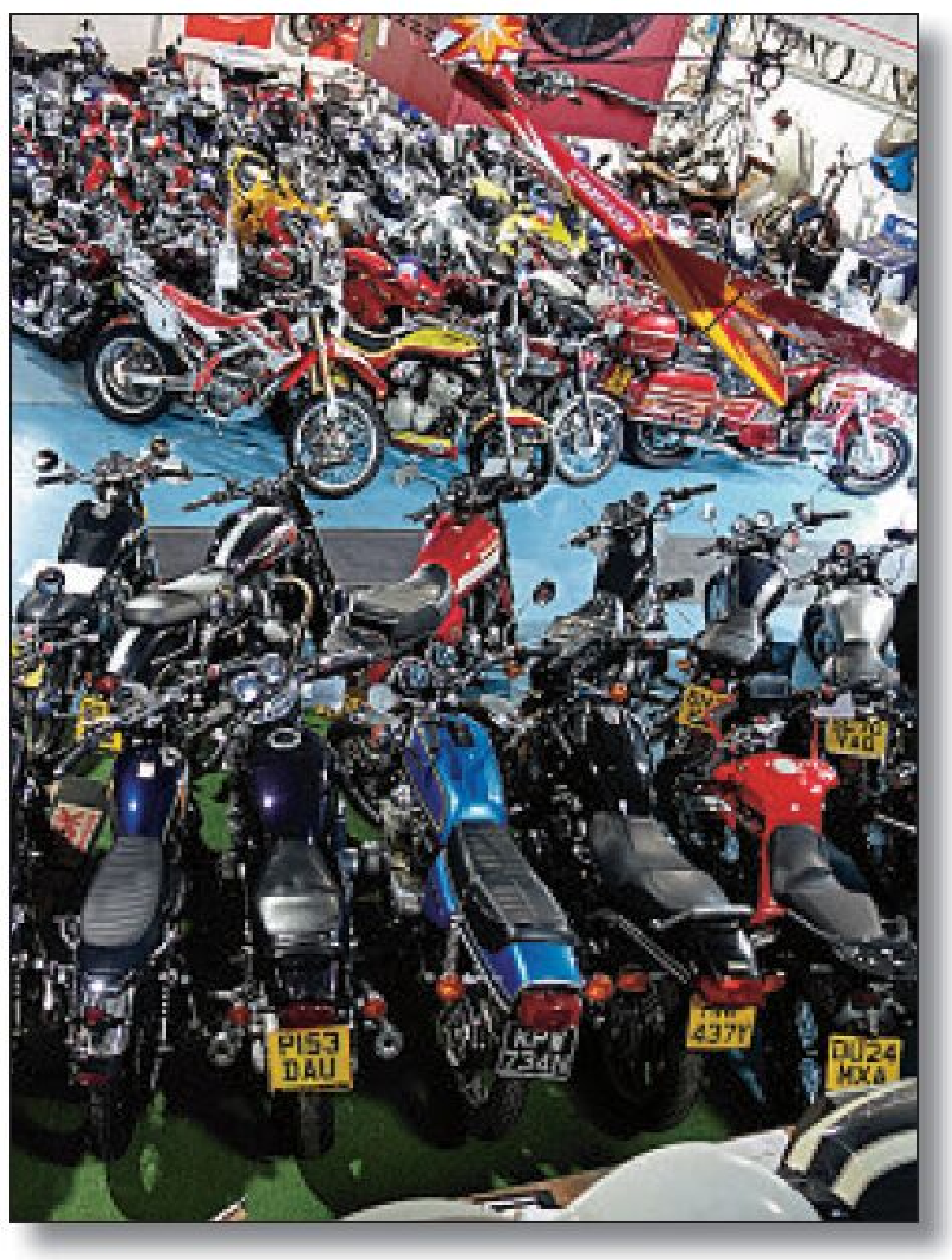

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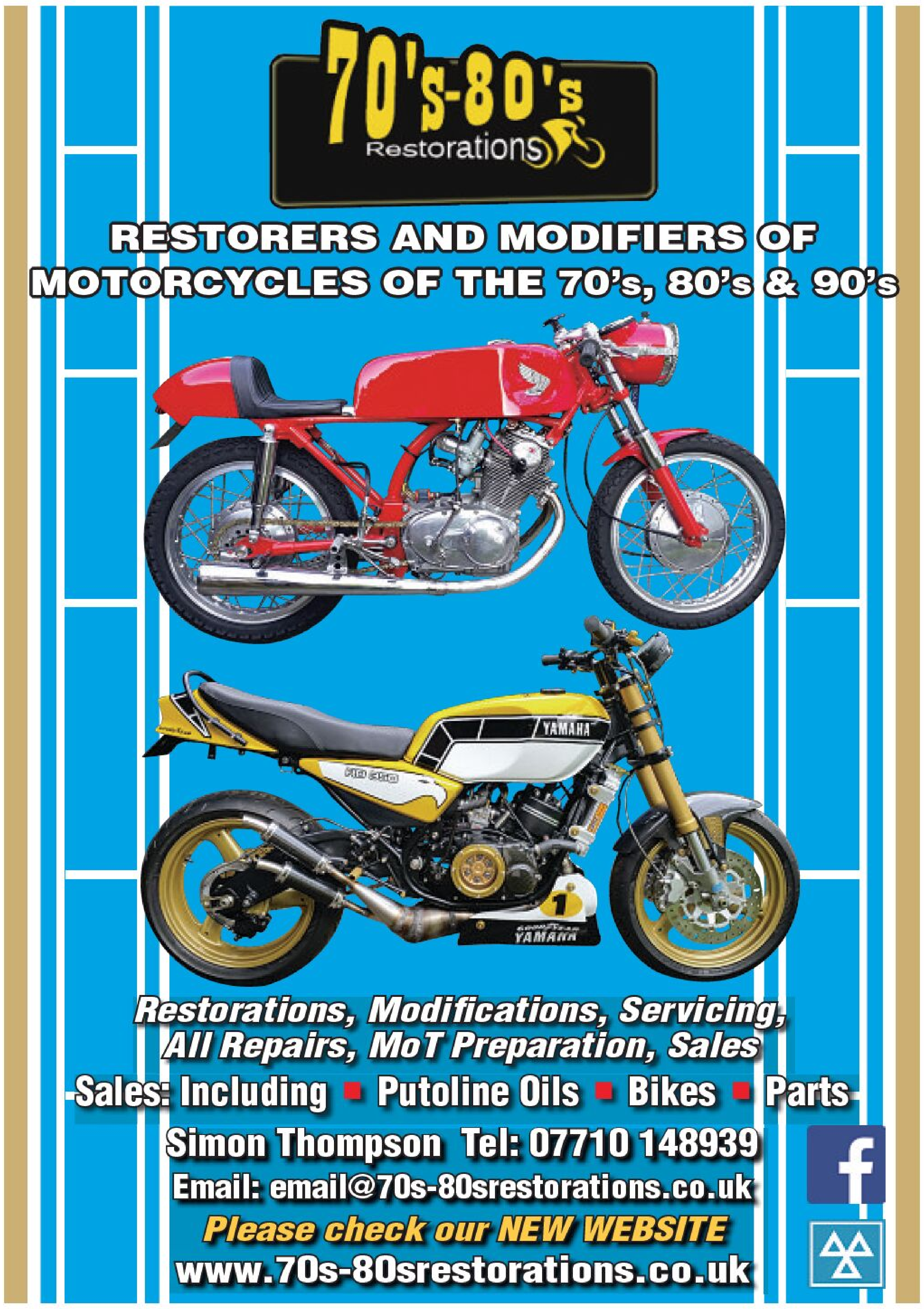

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WORDS AND PICS: ANDY BOLAS

Project Suzuki SV650S Part 2

Tanks, mate!

Getting on with making his V-twin sing, Andy sorts the fuel tap, seals the tank and gets some new tyres fitted. He gets all greasy, too…

Since our Bertie took the SV out for its road test (January 2025 issue) it hasn't really moved due to another bike taking up my time (all will be revealed soon) in the workshop.

However, with the arrival of the new tyres from Pirelli I felt a little more motivated to get the SV sorted out and ready for the summer. While moving the bike from the garage to the workshop there was a very strong smell of fuel; a quick check of the oil level and it's over the higher-level marking while on the side-stand. Not a good start!

I removed the oil filler cap and the oil was definitely contaminated with fuel as the smell was so strong. A little more investigation and I have found the culprit: the vacuum tap was dripping every couple of seconds and the weight of the fuel must have pushed past the needle valves and gone straight into the SV's motor, filling it up with fuel.

A quick check on the Fowlers website and the taps are still available for £148.06 plus VAT, which sounds a little steep to start with, but when you think this one has lasted a quarter-of-a-century it's worth buying genuine. Luckily, being a member of the VJMC entitles you to a 10 per cent discount on parts from Fowlers. So, if you haven't already: join the VJMC!

With the new fuel tap now ordered I could drain the fuel tank and remove it completely from the bike. While this was off, I took the opportunity to seal the tank. That's a job for later though, as I really want to get the contaminated oil out of the motor. With the oil tray underneath, it was time to crack the sump plug off and see how much fuel has gone into the motor.

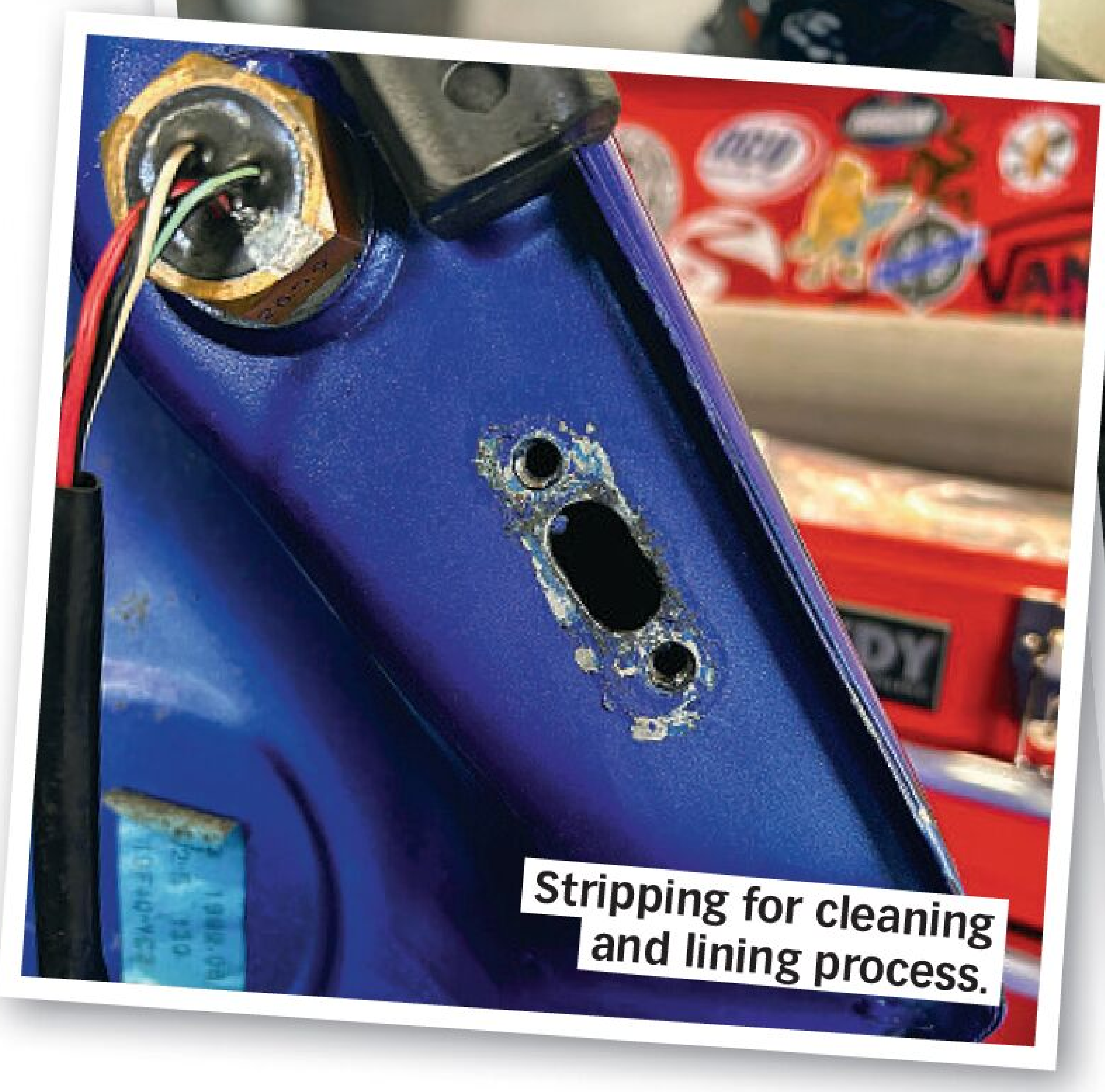
Well, there is approximately 3.1 litres of oil in the tray! Normal capacity is 2.3ml plus a bit for the filter; lucky I didn't try to fire the bike up with that much oil/petrol in it as the damage could have been catastrophic.

Time to remove the old oil filter now and fit the new genuine filter that came with the bike along with a new sump plug washer for good measure. With the filter and sump plug installed, it's time to add the fresh oil to the motor (any decent 10w40 semi-synthetic oil is fine).

I started off by adding around 2.2 litres of oil to the motor before starting it up and allowing it to run briefly before checking the level. Then I added another quarter-of-a-litre to bring the oil just shy of the maximum mark on the window in the engine case, then ran it briefly again and

Fuel dripping!

New fuel-tap.


Stripping for cleaning and lining process.

Fresh oil in.

checked the level and we were all good.

Now while the tank was off, I could replace the air filter which, although it looked clean enough to go again, it smelt of fuel badly, so a new filter went in.

My next job was to replace the original drive chain which looked untidy. I opt to replace it with a JT gold X-ring chain, which are extremely good value and quality. First thing to do is crack off the rear spindle and wind in the chain adjusters, then grind off the dimples on the face plate, separate the link so you can attach the new chain to the old one and pull it round on the front sprocket until the new chain is almost back on itself; now the old chain can be removed.

Now the new chain can be joined together with the new rivet link; don't forget to fit the tiny O-rings before pushing the link through the chain and the same again when fitting the faceplate to the chain. Once the face plate is firmly attached, the rivets can be spread with the chain riveter. You must ensure that the ends have mushroomed over, otherwise there is a chance the link could separate and cause the chain to come off!

The new gold chain looks so much more appealing compared to the manky original one; another job ticked off the list.

Next job is to remove the wheels and get these lovely new Pirelli's fitted. Up on the paddock stands we go. While we are removing the wheels, the calipers have to be removed so we can check the condition of the pads and pistons, etc. The pads still have enough meat on them for a good few miles. However, the pistons are quite grubby and could do with a good clean.

At some point I plan to strip the calipers, clean the pistons and check the condition of the seals. I can do this at the same time as I change and flush the brake fluid, which is another job that needs to be completed. Another thing I have noticed whilst taking the bike apart is the lack of grease on spindles, etc., so everything is getting a good coat of grease or copper grease as required as I want to keep this little bike long-term.

With the wheels out, it's time to pop down to see Keith Brindle at Chase Superbikes and get the tyres swapped over. Off with the old Metzelers, which were tricky to get off as they were solid and hard and looked like the OE fitment tyres. On with our new Diablo Rosso III tyres. Back to my workshop to refit the wheels, greasing things up as required along the way. The brakes aren't dragging so I'm going to leave them until another day to do.

Now for the job I have been putting off: sealing the petrol tank which needs a clean, well-ventilated area to be carried out. Once the level sensor and tap are removed, firstly I clean the tank out with methylated spirits as this will evaporate after swilling it around and also removes any fuel residue (the tank has already been cleaned out with Deox C). Once this is done the tank is ready to have the

➔

Here lies the Suzuki SV650's air-box. Best whip it open...

Carb tops.

1999-2002
SV650
Nice, new air-filter ready for fitting.

...old air-filter.

New oil-filter.
SUZUKI
SV650
Oil Filter / Filtre à huile

Old oil-filter off.

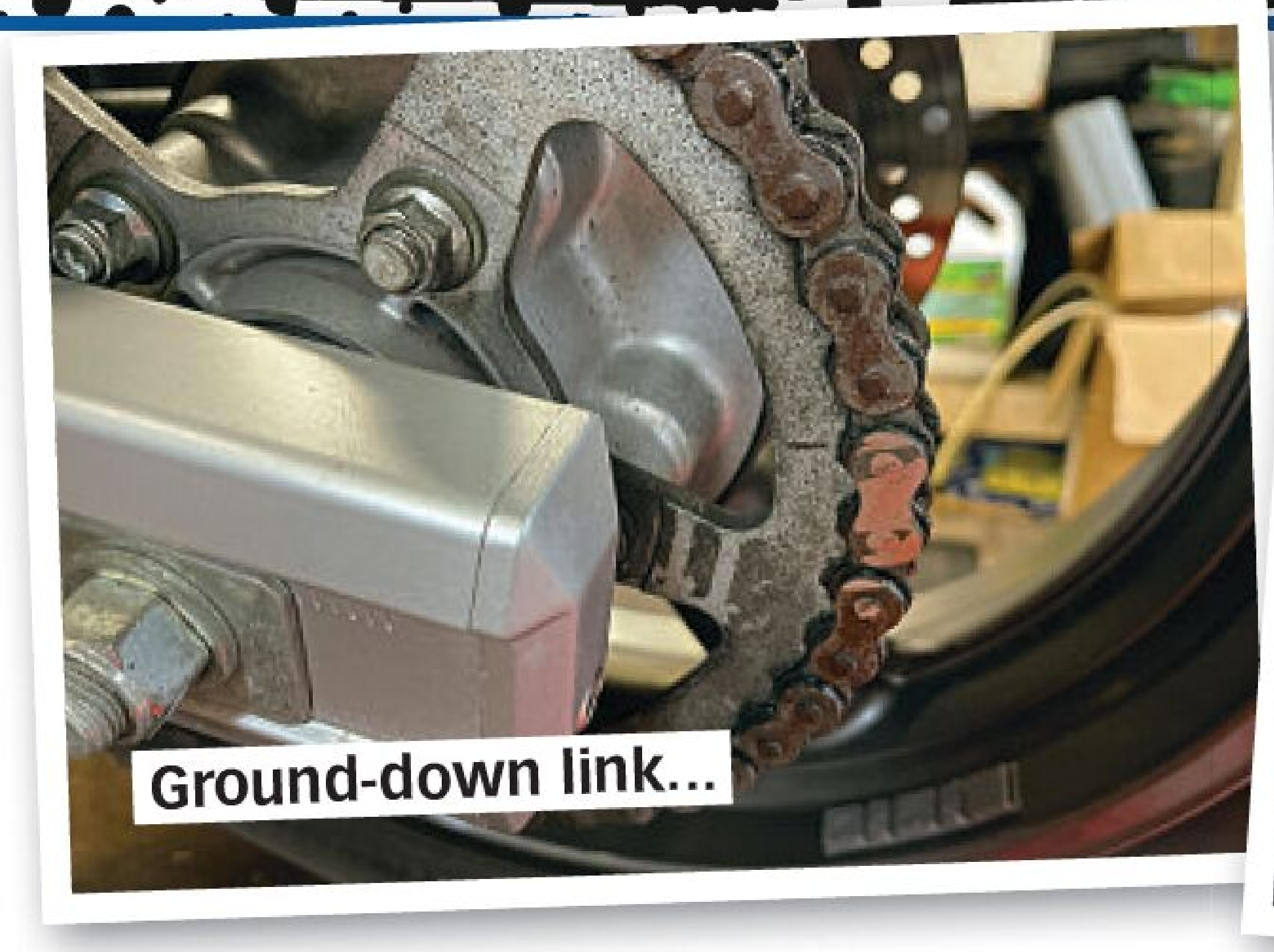
holes blanked or covered over.

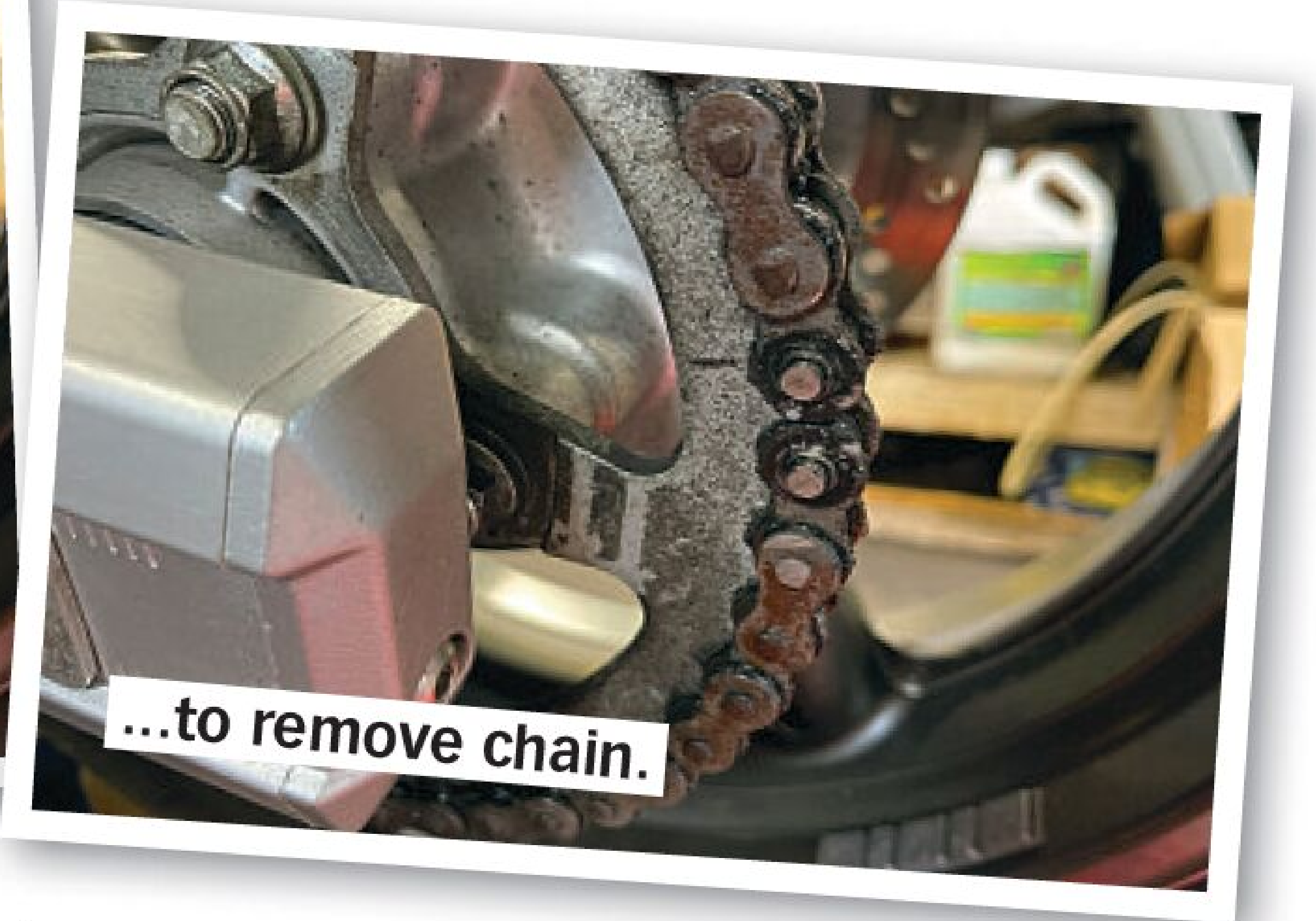
My sealer of choice currently is POR-15 which you can get from Frost Restorers Equipment. It forms a tough, flexible coating which bonds to the inner surface of your tank, forming an incredibly strong permanent coating. It is also totally resistant to all fuels, alcohols, ethanol and petrol additives. It can seal leaking seams and even pin holes.

The instructions say to stir the can until a uniform colour is achieved, and while it's time-consuming, taking around five minutes to accomplish the desired uniform colour, it's a good idea to follow the instructions to a tee.

Then I covered over all the holes and poured the sealer into the tank. You must make sure that the sealer coats every inch of the inner surface of the tank, so I'm using my patio table with a soft sheet and old pillow to lay the tank at various angles.

After you're happy you have covered everywhere internally, you pour it all out again. Unbelievably, about a third of it came back out again. Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do with the leftovers, you just have to wait for it to set then throw it away.


Ground-down link...


...to remove chain.

I left the tank until the following afternoon and checked the inside of it with a torch, and it seemed to have got a full coating. It's a full-day job to do it properly but you can get on with other stuff while the coating is curing, and anything that stops the tank rusting and contaminating the fuel lines and carbs has to be good.

So now the tank is dry I can refit the fuel tap, level sender and cap. I can now add fuel and we are ready to go again.

Next time we tackle the brake lines, brake fluid and strip and clean the calipers. *cmm*

Thanks to:

Simon Carter, Pirelli for the Diablo Rosso III tyres

Dream Machine for top-quality paintwork and bodywork repairs: 0115 973 6615

Peter Eaton, Cataclean for the PowerShot fuel system treatment: **www.cataclean.com**

Keith Brindle, Chase Superbikes (now a Suzuki dealer) for changing the tyres for me: 01543 466416

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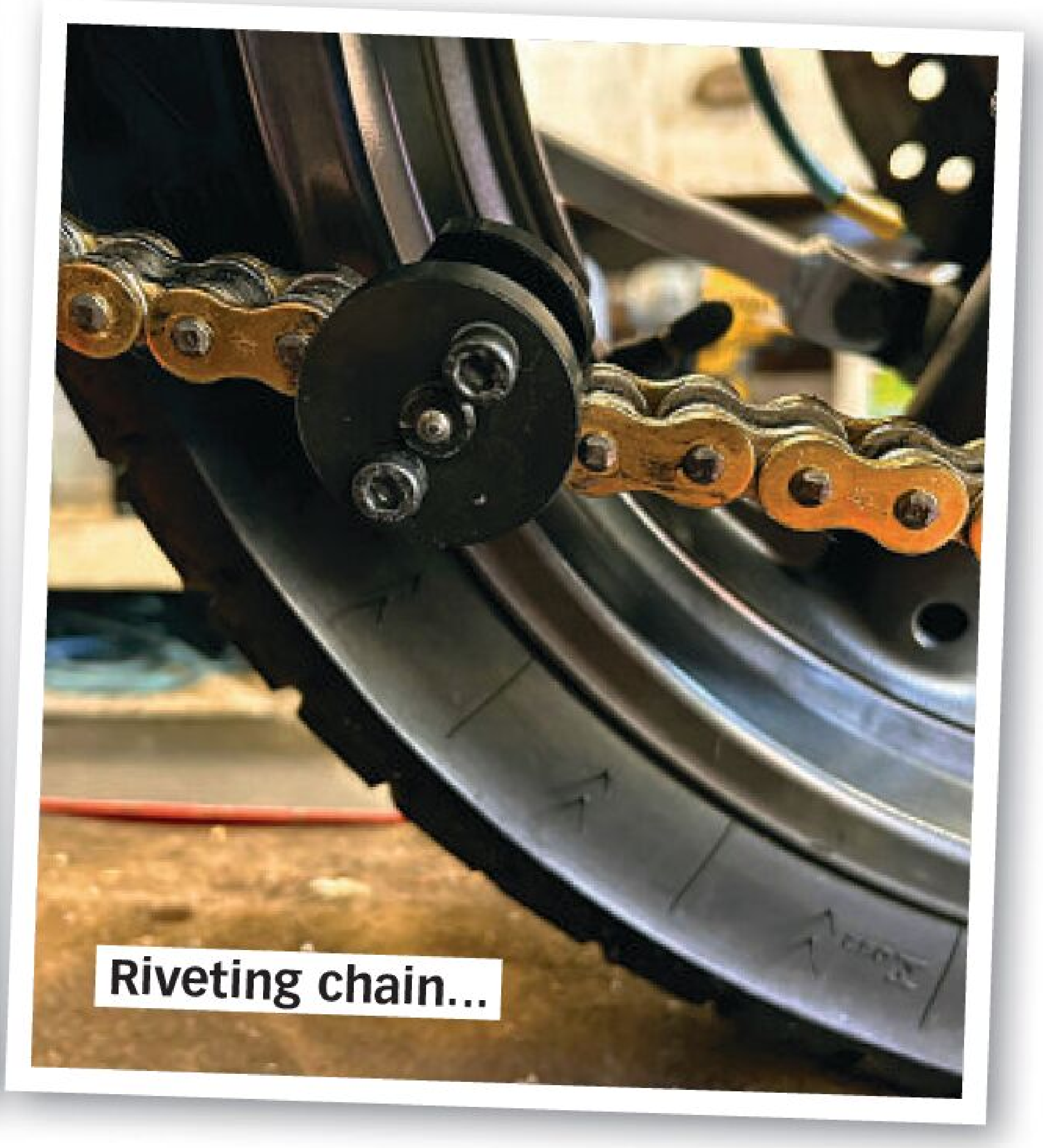
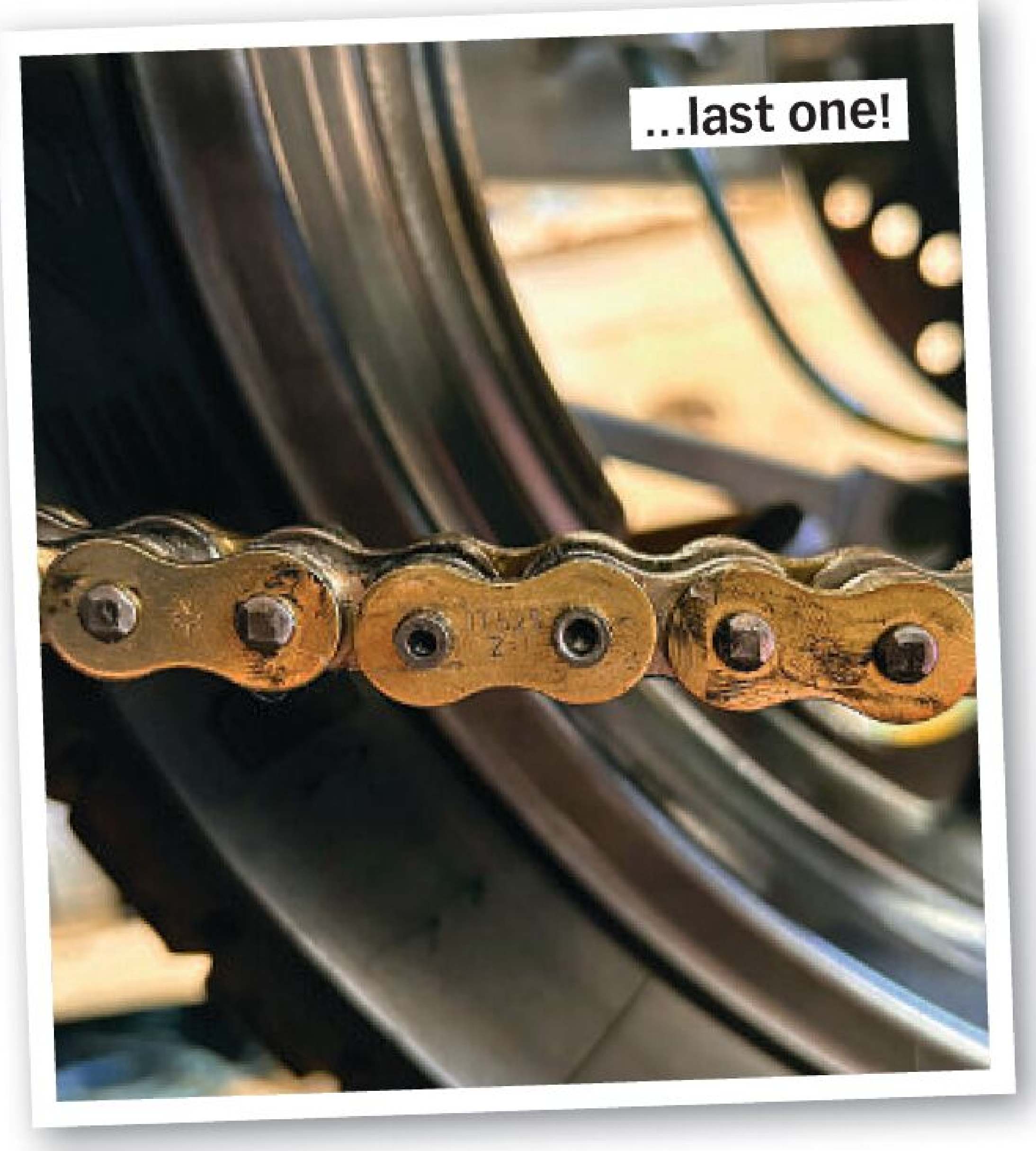
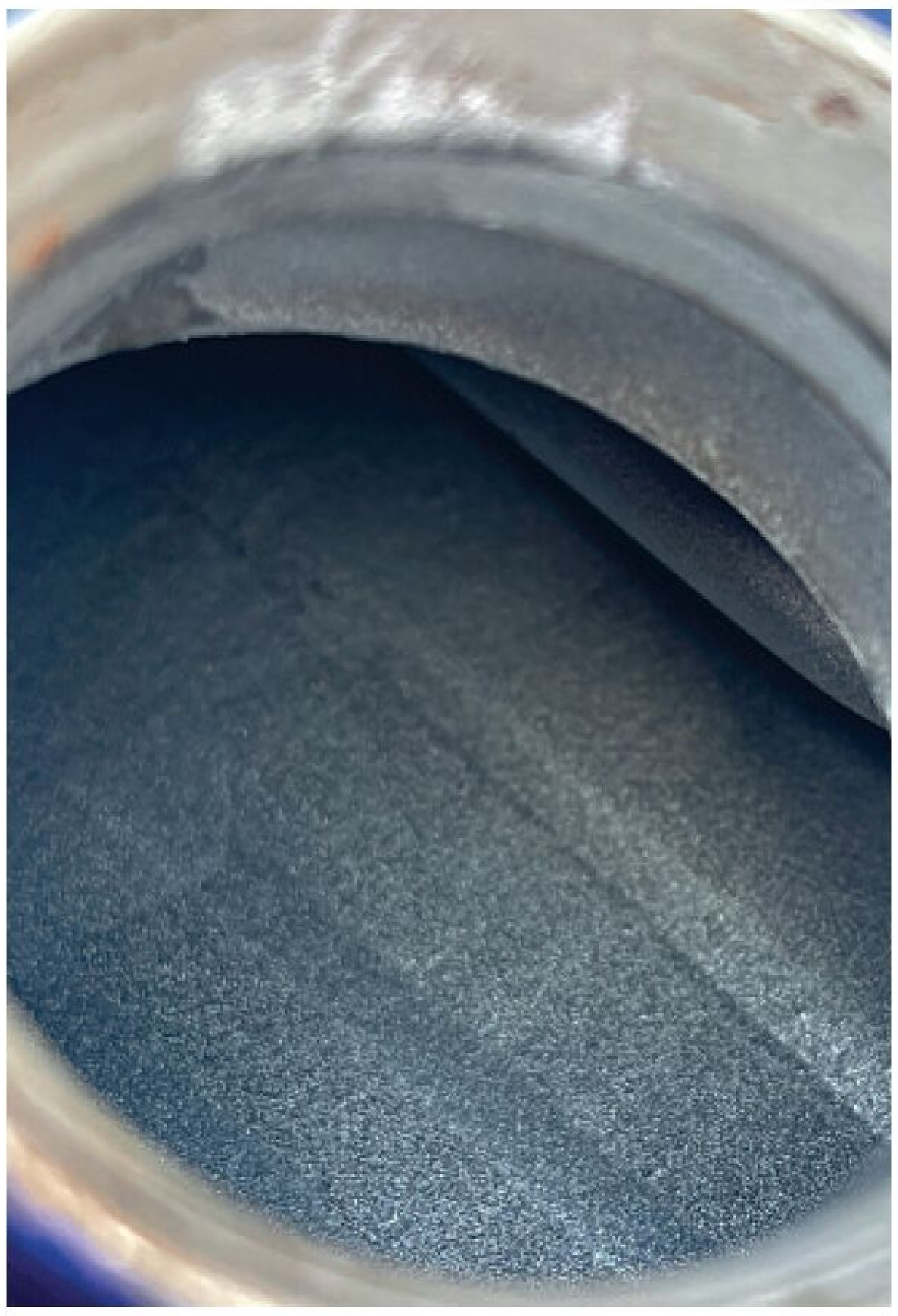

Riveting chain...


...last one!

Lovely new Pirellis fitted to wheels.

Rear wheel back in, after a clean-up.


The tank liner inside the SV's tank is drying out nicely here...

All done and sorted and ready for action once more!

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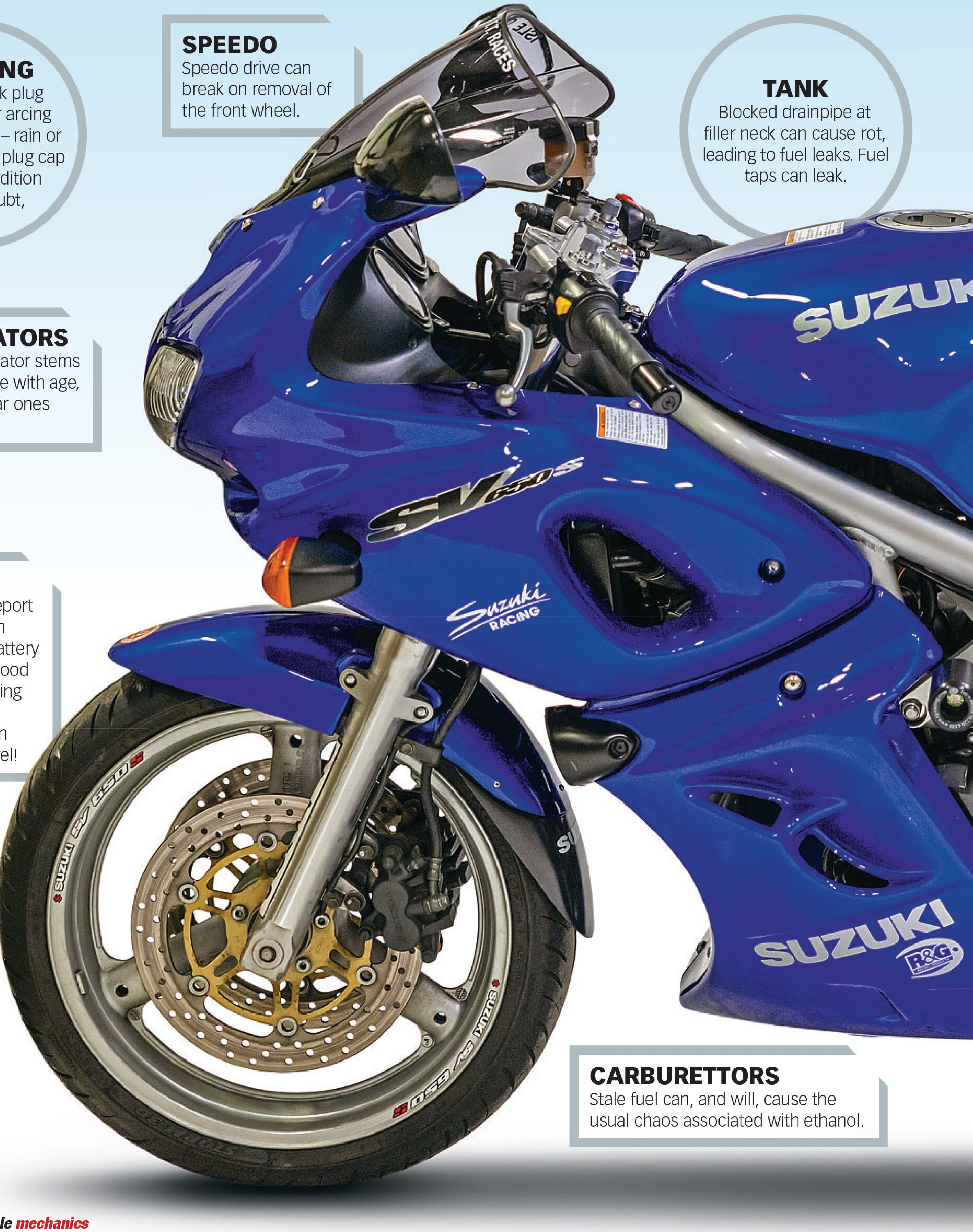
WORDS: STEVE COOPER
PHOTOS: GARY CHAPMAN

SUZUKI SV650S Gen.1

Suzuki's inexpensive middleweight ticks so many boxes: What's not to like?



MISFIRING
The front spark plug is notorious for arcing out if it gets wet – rain or cleaning. Ensure plug cap is in good condition and if in doubt, replace.

SPEEDO
Speedo drive can break on removal of the front wheel.

TANK
Blocked drainpipe at filler neck can cause rot, leading to fuel leaks. Fuel taps can leak.

INDICATORS
Front indicator stems disintegrate with age, but not rear ones strangely!

STARTING
Some owners report starting issues in cold weather; battery needs to be in good order and charging system working properly. Key can rattle in the barrel!

CARBURETTORS
Stale fuel can, and will, cause the usual chaos associated with ethanol.

BODYWORK
Crazing and cracking around mount point of S model fairing common.

ENGINE
Many owners remark on top-end engine noise, but this seems to be typical. Unless it's excessive and/or loud, the motor is likely to be okay. Early issues with failing automatic front cam-chain adjusters probably now all sorted.

Suzuki is deleting the SV650 from its range from 2026 (current RRP £6749 OTR.) But, if you happen to have five grand burning a hole in your pocket, you could get a three-year-old Suzuki SV650.

Alternatively, £3500 will get you a seven-year-old with only 5k on the odometer. Interesting, but not for us this month – as we're looking at the Gen.1 version of Suzuki's little miracle and frittering away no more than £2000. For that we're confident of getting a fully road-legal bike with a few extras and a three-month warranty. Bargain anyone?

Suzuki's SV650 arrived at a time when many riders were looking for sensible, yet exciting, middleweights as an antithesis to out-and-out super-sports bikes - think Yamaha Fazer or Honda Hornet 600. Doubtless, Suzuki could have come up with yet another inline four but no, they went their own sweet way with a V-twin. Other than Ducati, no one else was giving the engine layout serious thought and so the Hamamatsu brand ultimately launched a pair of V-twins in the guise of the

REGULATOR/ RECTIFIER
Can fail leading to overcharging. Also check connections for corrosion and dirt.

OVERHEATING
Rare but not unheard of: a clean, unblocked radiator and correct coolant level are vital.

SUSPENSION
Likely top feel tired on higher mileage examples. Forks always felt soft.

WIRING
Rider's seat screws can damage wiring; passenger seat rubs against wiring near frame tube.

It's my Bike – Andy Hodder

In 2000 we were looking for a new bike and narrowed it down to the Yamaha FZS600 or the Suzuki SV650S.

The SV won because the rear foot-pegs were lower and more comfortable for my wife Lyn, plus I preferred the V-twin engine. Our SV650S was purchased from Rob Wilsher Motorcycles for £4000 with genuine fairing lowers and rear hugger added to the deal 'at cost'. The SV went to Europe and the Isle of Man. It did this two-up perfectly, including soft luggage and a tank bag. Later, Lyn rode the SV for five years. Then it became a second bike to other bikes. We couldn't part with it.

We added a full Akrapovic exhaust and an MRA screen in 2002 and later, adjustable fork tops. Recently, the SV has returned to use on ride-outs and being displayed on VJMC stands, especially the 25th anniversary of the SV at Stafford. It's been on many tracks, too.

Our SV650S is the perfect all-rounder: even two-up! The current mileage is around 19,000.

TL1000 and SV650. The 1000 arrived first in 1997 with the TL1000S, which soon earned a worrying bad-boy reputation.

The SV650 was seen two years later and although visually not dissimilar it wasn't simply a scaled-down copy. Despite replicating some notes of the larger bike, the 650 ploughed a different furrow in not being an out-and-out sports machine. Running carbs instead of fuel injection; an oil guide that sprayed oil directly on to the gear faces; a noise-reducing plastic clutch case cover and much more, the bike had been developed to work as – in Suzuki's own words – a sporty urban commuter. With a lowish seat height and rider-friendly ergonomics it was a machine that appealed to anyone who wanted fun but didn't want to undertake multiple loosening-up exercises before and after each ride.

Again using the Suzuki's words: '…the truss-style frame, with its low weight and high torsional rigidity, takes better advantage of V-twin power delivery characteristics as opposed to the heavier twin-spar frames found on in-line fours.'

With substantial investment in both motor and frame, costs were pared back a little elsewhere with basic front forks and a simple, pre-load adjustable, rear shock.

Quite possibly that all might sound a tad 'safe and boring', but not a bit of it. The motor was smooth and eager, flexible and reliable, making Ducati's 620 Monster feel almost crude and agricultural by comparison. And then, of course, there was the firm's legendary gearbox with its delightful, hot knife through butter, gear change. The press loved it, the public loved it, and sales were robust. However, there were one or two minor niggles regarding a perceived lack of tech and the alloy chassis' propensity to grow fur if used during winter. And yet that winning combination of outstanding handling, ease of use and delicious engine outweighed any real issues.

Over in Japan the bike had been released in a 400 version as the SV400 along with the half-faired SV400S version; back in Europe a similarly equipped SV650S option very soon appeared. Differences were a rounded half-fairing on the S compared to a naked look. The S had sportier ergos and a 15 tooth front and 44 tooth rear sprocket for top-end compared to the naked's 15/45.

The original SV650 and SV650S carried on until being replaced by the Gen.2 model which arrived for the 2003 model year, fitted with fuel-injection, a new frame, upgraded instruments and more angular styling. Later changes included a black frame (2005-on), ABS option and a twin-spark motor (2007), and a fully-faired Sport model (2008) before more changes in 2017.

The black sheep of the family is 2009's SFV 650 Gladius which took the bike's styling to another place entirely. Uncharitably nicknamed the Suzuki Gladys, many would argue the firm had seriously over-egged the pudding!

Ultimately, any SV650 will impress and each iteration has its fans, but it's the Gen.1 series that's arguably the purest of the breed. Yes, it's a practical middleweight but it's never dull or unexciting. With low running costs and relatively cheap insurance the model has an awful lot going for it. Their owners rate then extremely highly and many reckon you don't need anything more on the UK's increasingly congested roads. Now go check out what we've found for sale and tell us it's not an absolute Barry Bargain! *cmm*

Not quite the Honda 'droop' on the winkers. But expect to rattle the key in the ignition barrel!

What to buy and how much to pay

You can buy a higher mileage spares or repair example for as little as £500; a runner with MoT can be had for as little as £650 and a really decent regular rider could be yours for just £1250!

We found several extremely nice low-mileage examples could be on your drive for £1995 so what are you hanging around for? The partially faired S variant gets the rider bent down a little more than the naked model so it's worth sitting on both to decide which best suits.

Some examples on offer are ex-race or track-day bikes so you want to look a little deeper for signs of lock wiring, etc. Although there's nothing fundamentally wrong with a track escapee, there're so many bog-standard SV650s out there at sensible money, you'd have to question why you'd take a chance. Some forums suggest wiring loom wear and chafing isn't uncommon so if you spot insulation tape or bodged repairs move on swiftly – other than that, just buy a good one and enjoy. Just like that well-known supermarket says… Spend a little, live a lot!

RESOURCES

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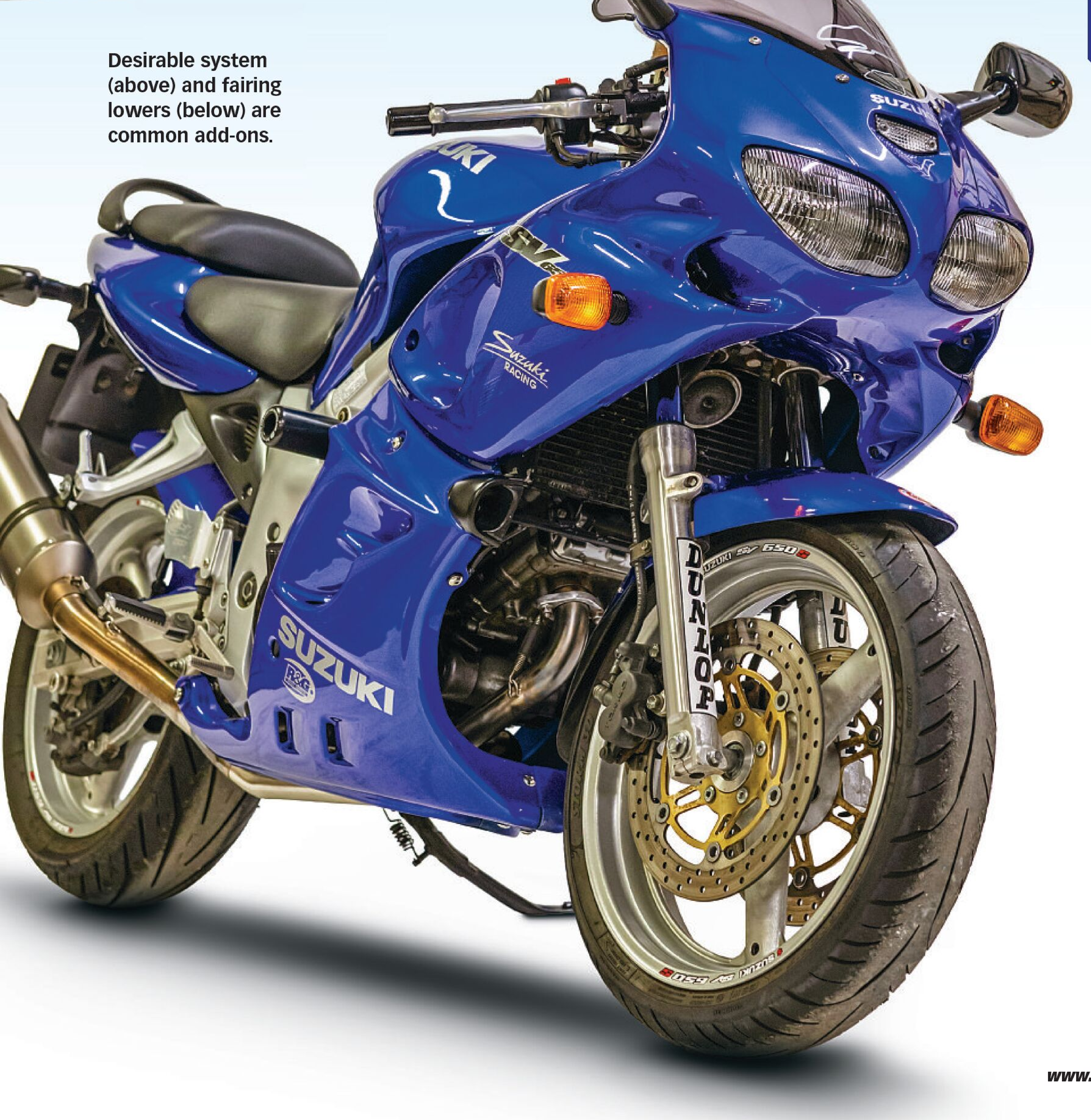

Desirable system (above) and fairing lowers (below) are common add-ons.

SPECIFICATION

SUZUKI SV 650S

ENGINE TYPE	645cc, 90-degree four-stroke V-twin, DOHC 4 valves/cylinder, liquid cooled
BORE AND STROKE	80.0 x 62.6mm
CLAIMED HORSEPOWER	72hp @ 9000rpm
MAXIMUM TORQUE	47.2ft-lb @ 7200rpm
TRANSMISSION TYPE	6 speed, chain final drive
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.5:1
CARBURATION	2 x Mikuni BDSR39
TYRES	120/60 ZR17 (F), 160/60-ZR17 (R)
FUEL CAPACITY	3.7 gallons (17 litres)
WET WEIGHT	189kg (417lb)
WHEELBASE	1420mm (55.9in)
OVERALL LENGTH	2045mm (80.5in)
OVERALL WIDTH	790mm (31.1in)
SEAT HEIGHT	800mm (31.5in)

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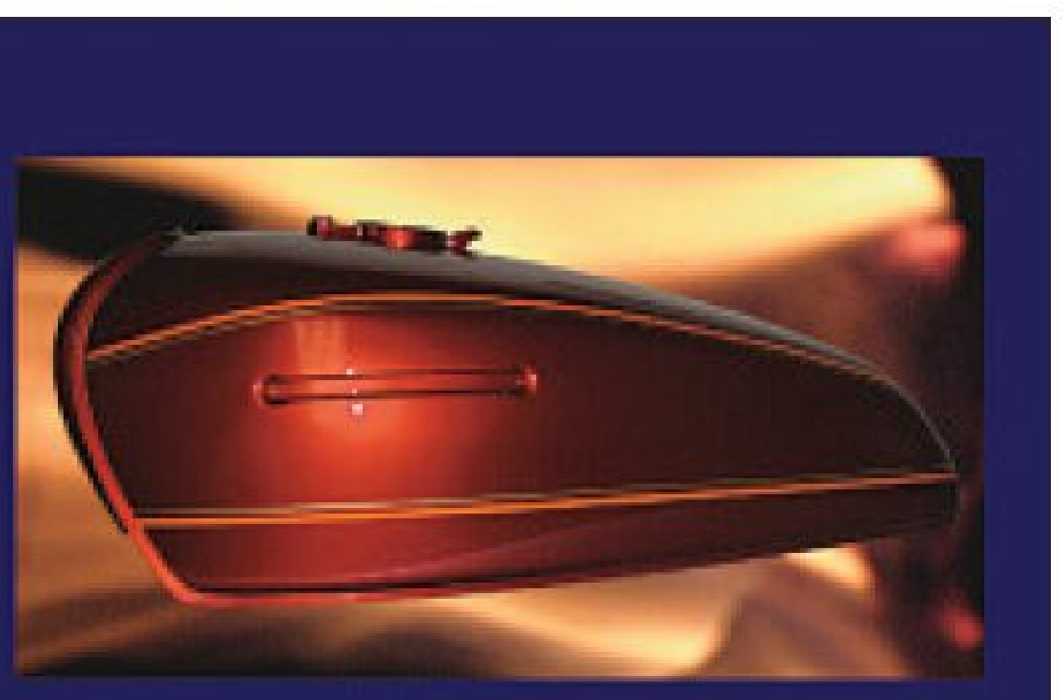

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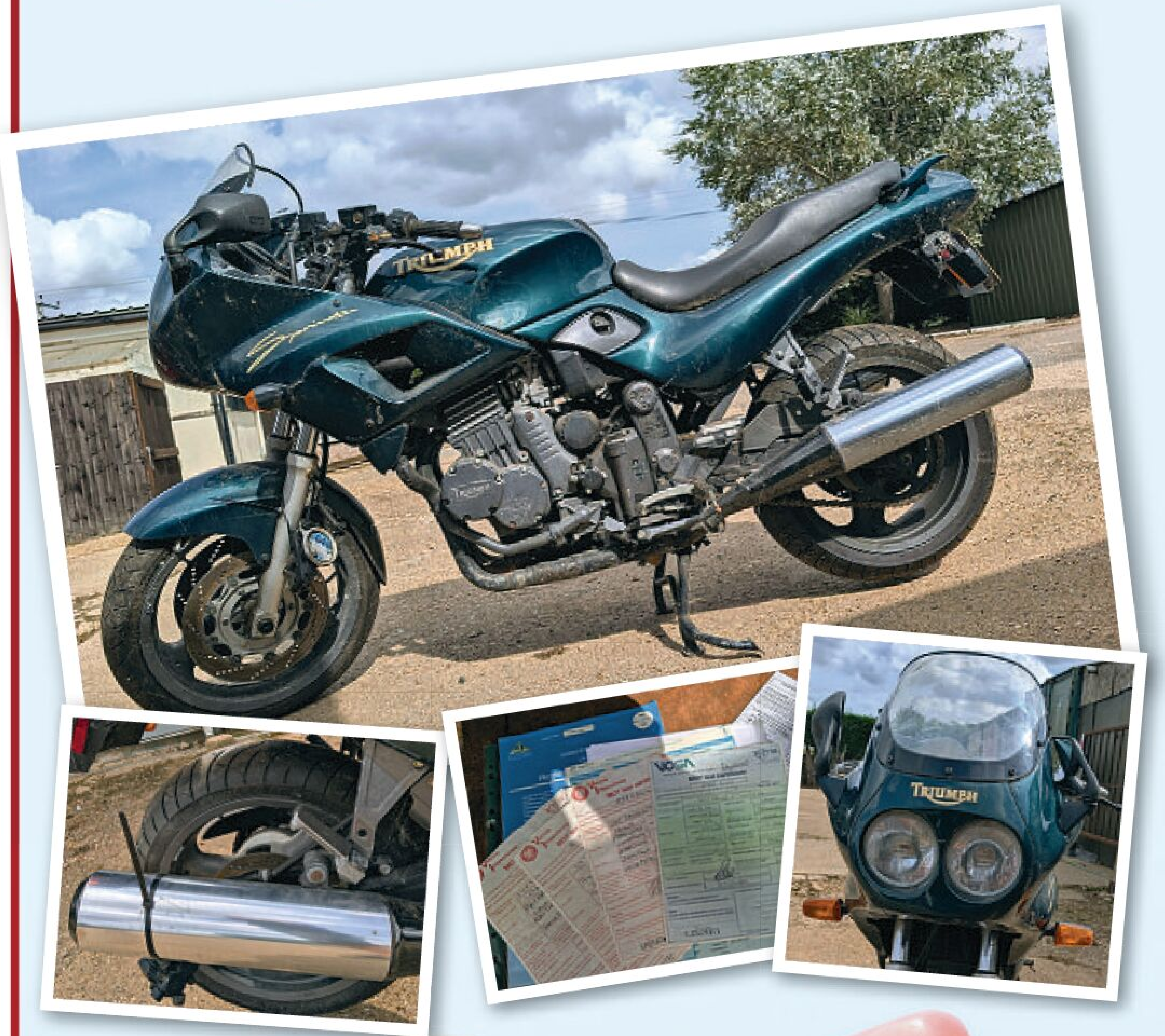
WORDS: **KEV RAYMOND**

Bay-watch*

*and FB Marketplace, and Gumtree, and anywhere else we spot something we like…

Kev Raymond keeps his eye on the choppy waters of the classic world to see if any projects, donors and bargains are out there worthy of being dragged out of the surf for some mouth-to-mouth…



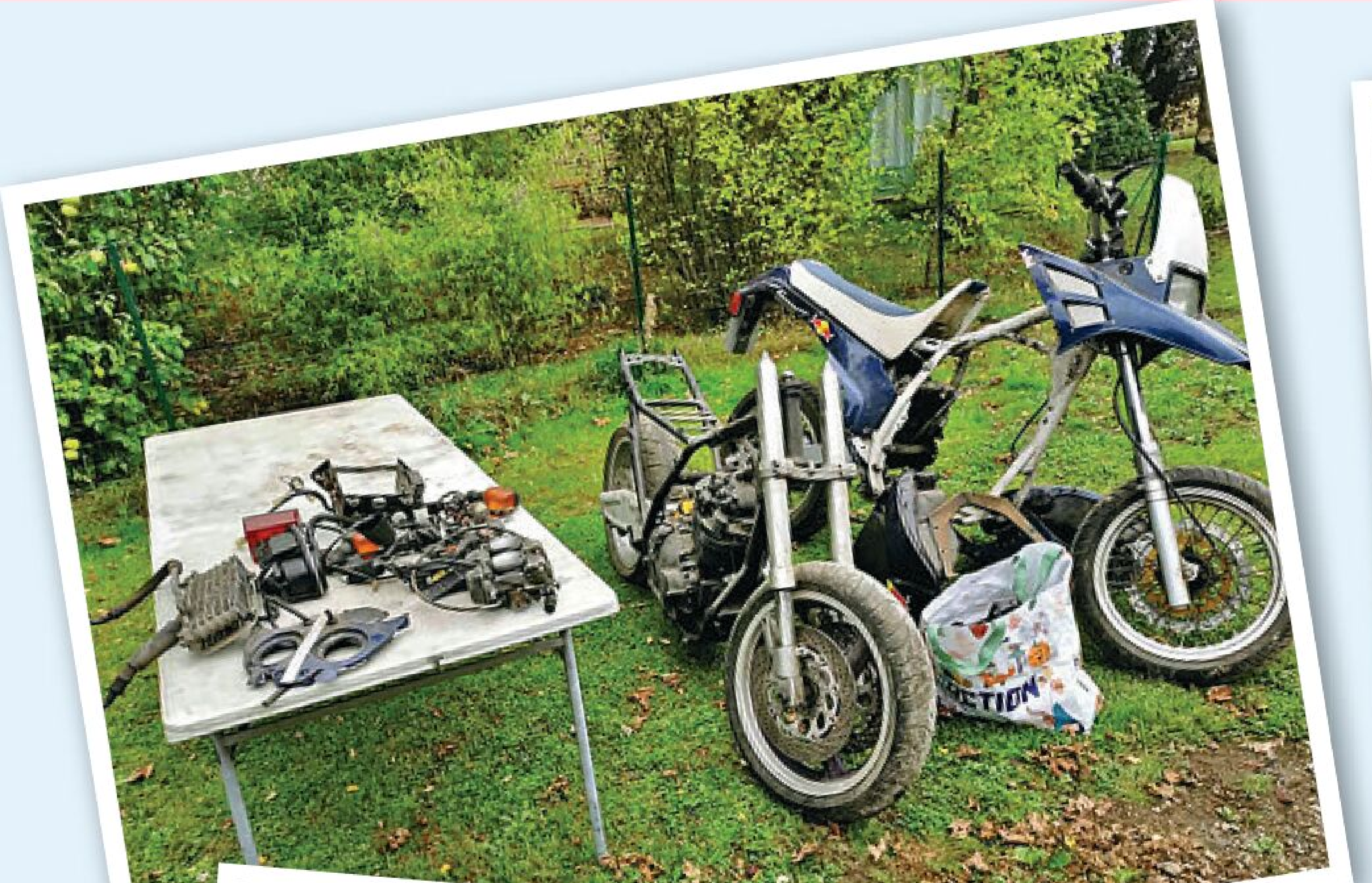
1998 Triumph Sprint 900

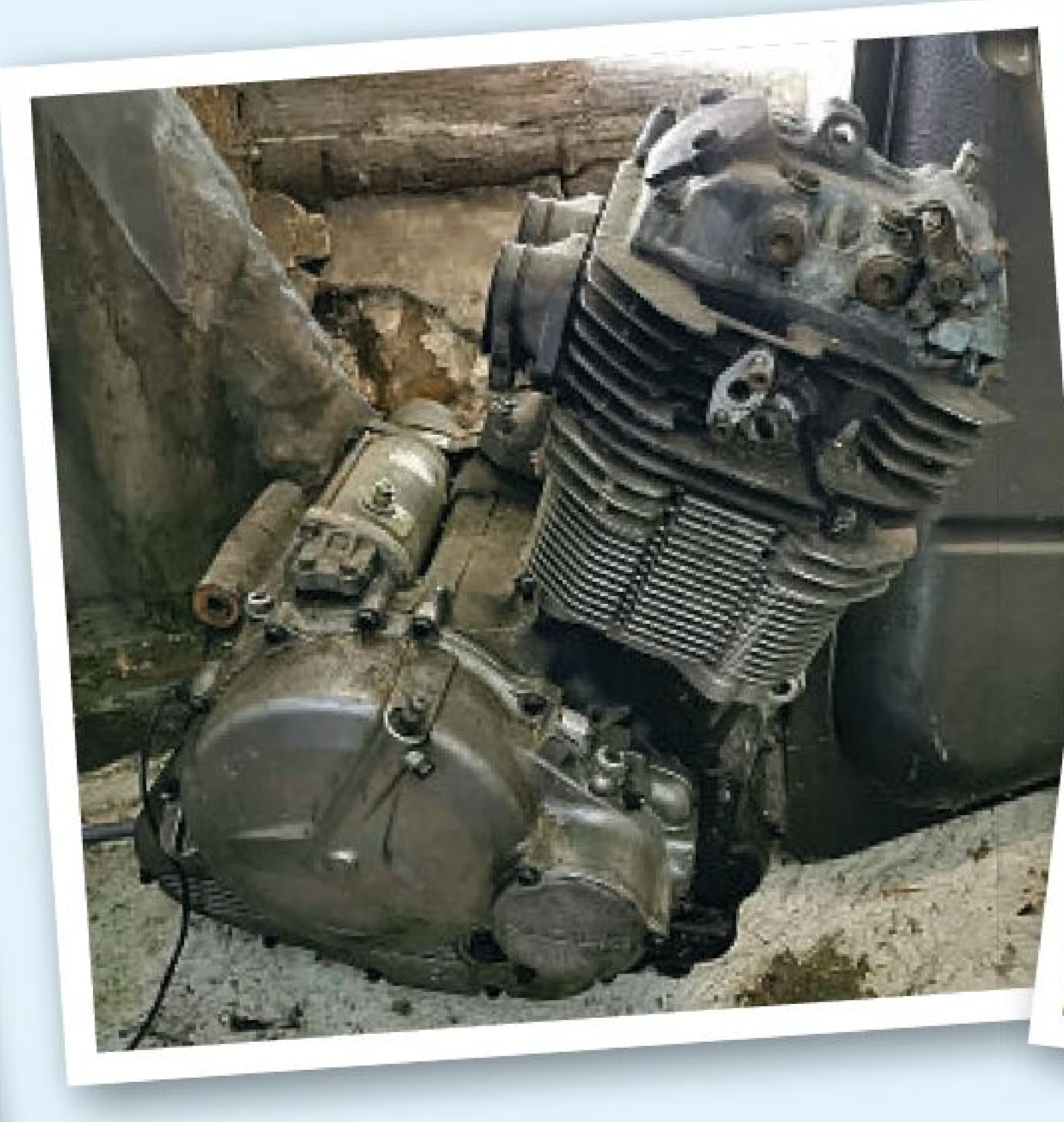
Asking: £500

I reckon this is my favourite incarnation of the original Hinckley triple. Something about the lines of the seat unit and half fairing just really suit it (the fairing's surprisingly effective at keeping the wind and weather off you as well) and in this metallic green I think it will look great once cleaned up.

It'll need a serious deep clean and recommission though, as it's been off the road since 2004 and obviously not stored carefully. But it's only got a (documented) 6k miles on the clocks, and it still has its original standard exhaust system – very much a rarity these days. Cleaned up and growling as it should, you'll have a comfy sports tourer which will also eat up a twisty road. It ticks a lot of the right boxes for me, including the one marked 'cheap as chips'. If I didn't already have a later Triumph triple in bits and waiting for me to fix it, I'd be all over this.

TRIUMPH
Sprint



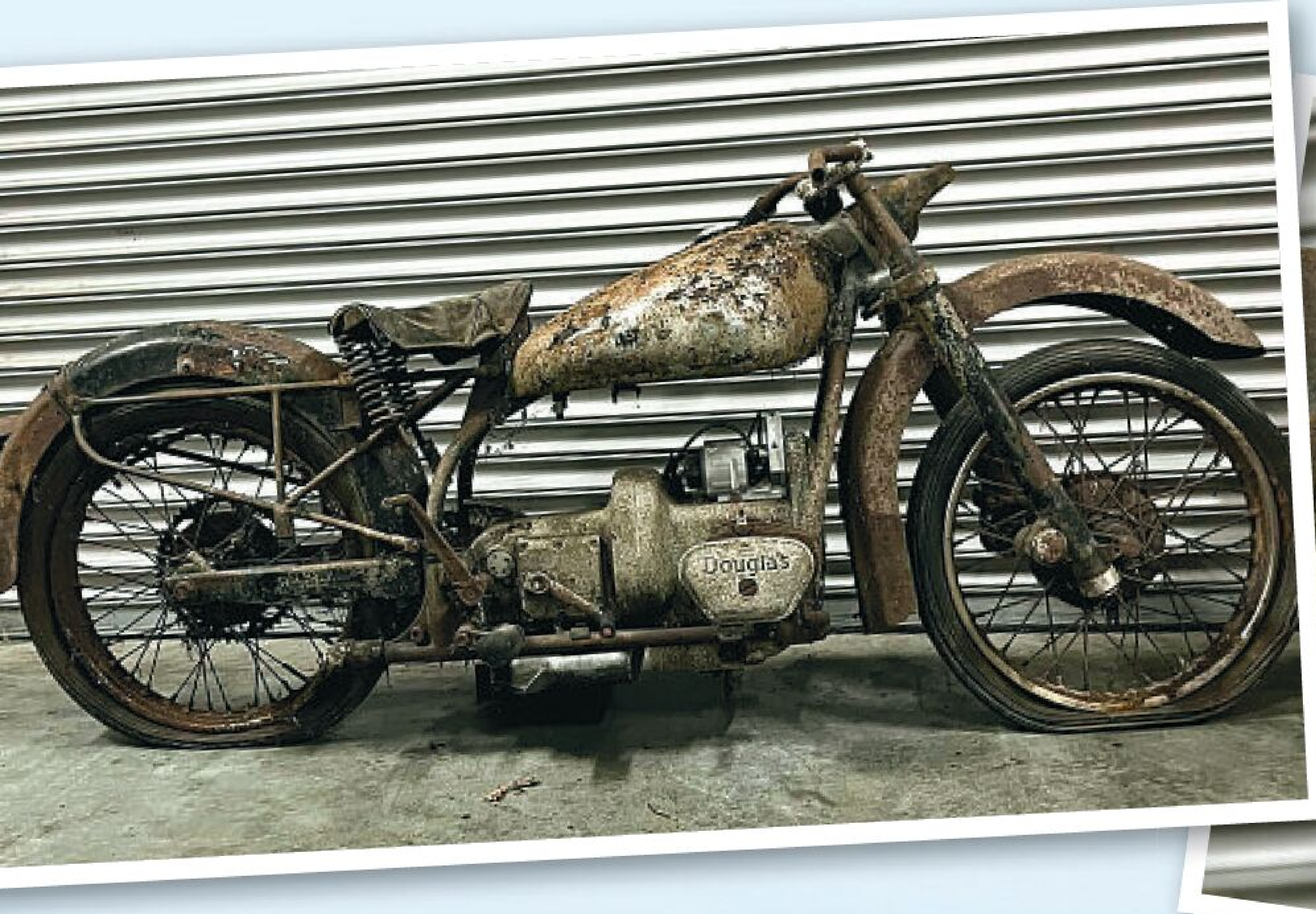


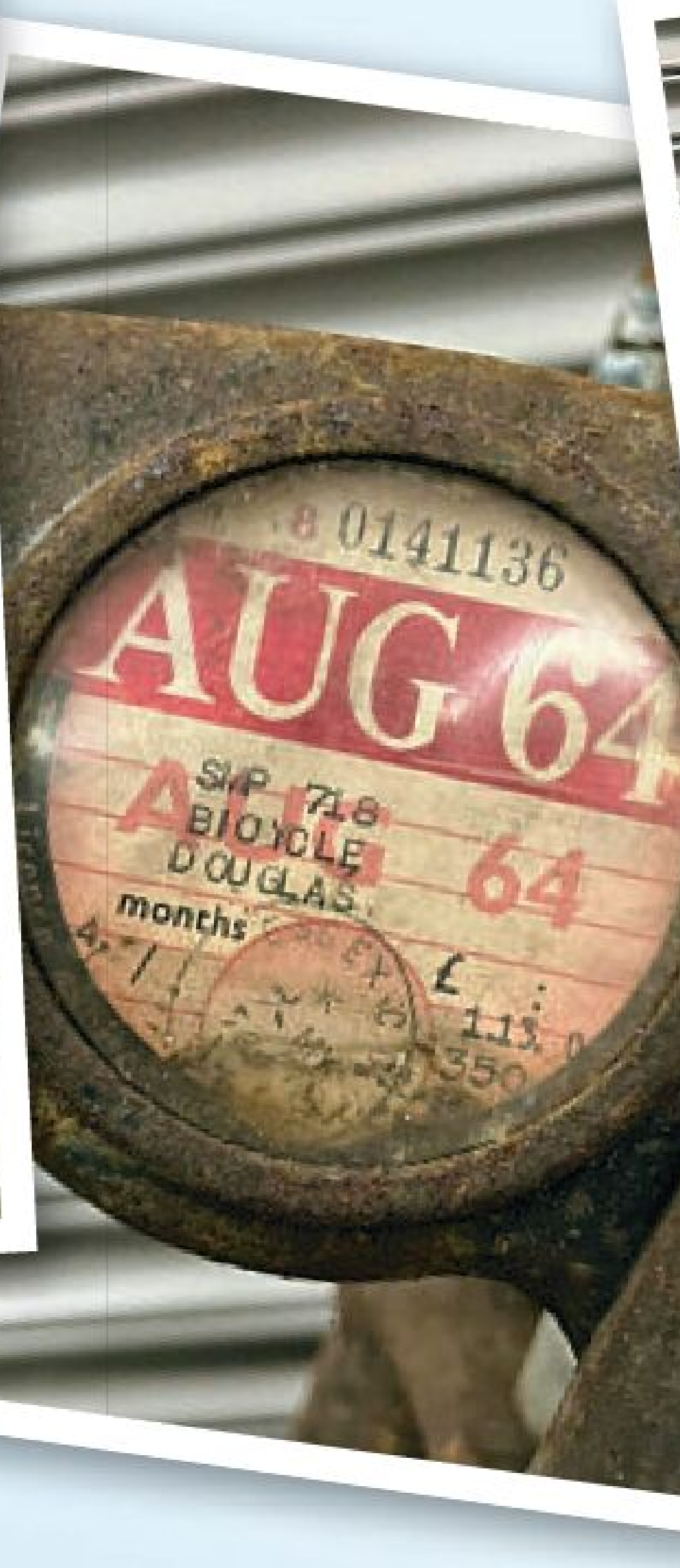
1993 Suzuki DR800

Asking: £260

I had a DR800 – briefly – in the late 90s. Absolute wheelie monster, it was. I bought it to strip the motor out to build a supermono race bike, but other projects got in the way and really it was too nice to break.

This pair aren't so nice, and ironically these days I'd prefer to put one of them back together as standard. One's obviously been heavily modified with GSX-R wheels and forks – I suspect you could get most of your money back on those parts alone. The other one apparently was a runner before being stripped and is now 'almost complete' according to the seller. So, with two motors, two chassis and a whole stack of spares there should be half a chance of making one good bike from the two, although sod's law states the bits that are missing will be the most inconvenient and hardest to find. I was very, very tempted, even though I'd already got too many unfinished projects.





1947 Douglas T35

Asking: £750

What an absolutely marvellous thing! Douglas had been building horizontally opposed twins for over 40 years by the time this one rolled out of the firm's Bristol workshops, although most of them had the cylinders in line with the bike, not poking out the sides.

Back then it would have been resplendent in black, blue, chrome and shiny aluminium, and must have been someone's pride and joy in the austerity of post-war Britain. So quite how it came to be parked up just 17 years later and left to rot is anyone's guess, but I would have loved to have been the lucky bugger who opened up its resting place 60 years on and brought it to light again.

It looks to be mostly there and hopefully it'll find its way into the hands of someone who'll restore it to its youthful good looks. You wouldn't want to put too much cash into it though – surprisingly, even really good examples only sell for a few grand.

1988 Honda RS250 NF5

Asking: £8995

'Dear Santa, I've been very good this year so I deserve something special for Christmas. Now, whilst I wouldn't presume to second-guess your choice of pressies, this would do very nicely, thank you...'*

Well, it's worth a try – and while I'm dreaming, can we have goodwill and peace on Earth while we're about it? No? Thought not...

In my opinion there are few things in life as lovely as a full-on two-stroke 250 GP bike, and this one is a very nice example, despite the slightly scruffy, scuffy bodywork. For a 37-year-old race bike it's remarkably standard – even commonly damaged bits like the lock-stops and foot-rests, master cylinders and wheels are all original and in good condition.

The seller says it's a runner but for proper track use it'll need a thorough going-over and ideally an engine strip and refresh. That would be a pleasure though – these things are made to be stripped and rebuilt every few races anyway. Also, it'll need some new paint, and that's where the fun starts. A quick flick through 1988's Motocourse leaves me wavering between a Niall Mackenzie HB Honda rep or classic Rothmans livery. What do you reckon...?

*This may not be strictly true...

HONDA
HONDA

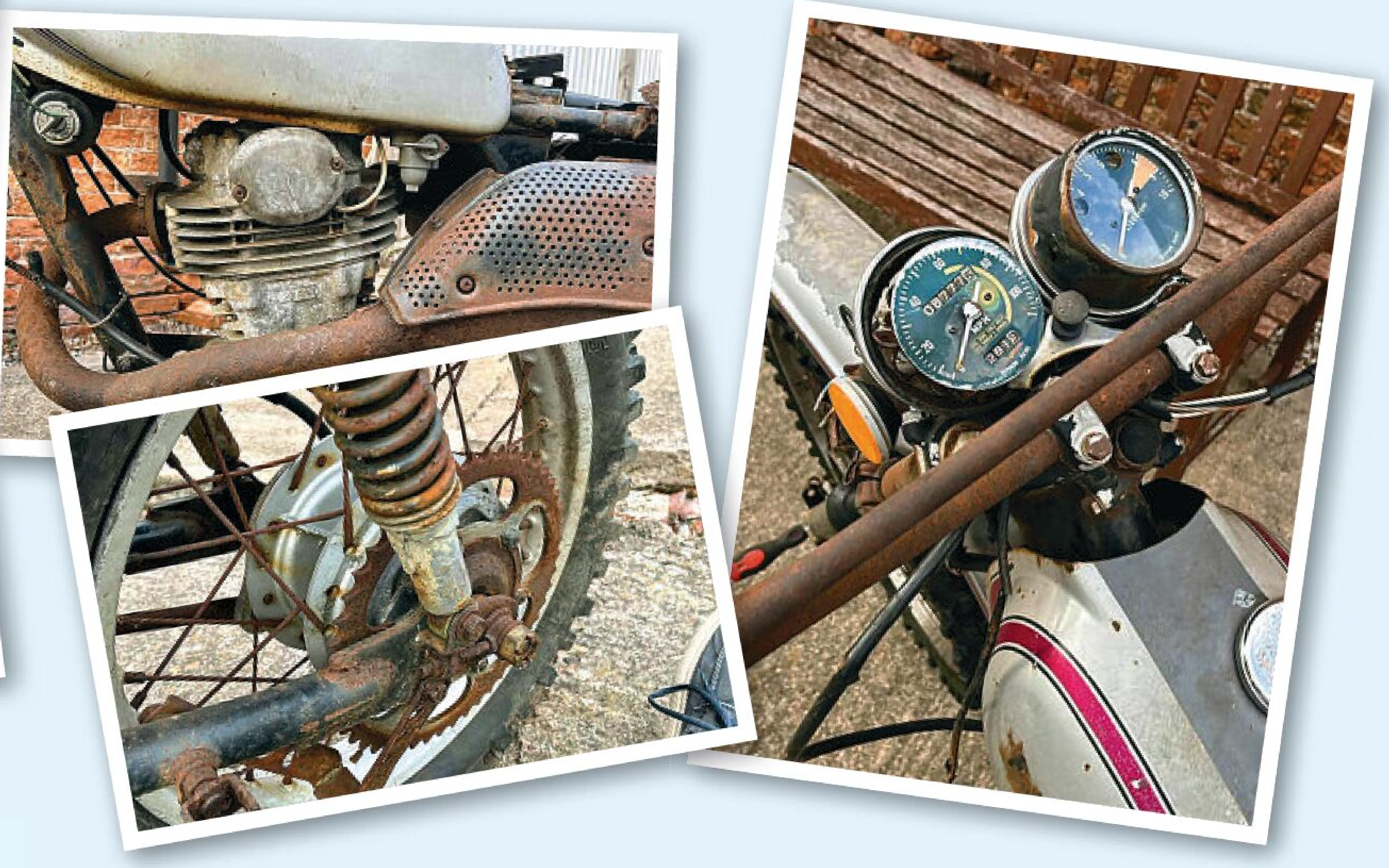
1975 Honda XL250 Motorsport

Asking: £750

One of those annoying Marketplace ads that tells you virtually nothing useful. In fact, in its entirety it just said, 'Project has nova collection Ossington notts.'

I'm assuming it's a recent import from the US of A, although by the look of it, it must have crossed the pond as deck cargo on a submarine. Fortunately, there are plenty of decent pics so the lack of description's not a big problem. Normally I'm happy to put on my rose-tinted safety specs and look beyond the rust to see the potential underneath, but the more I look at this, the more I'm inclined to back away.

The original exhaust is a plus point, but the missing or damaged bits (front brake and spindle, seat, clocks, headlight) and general deep decay put me off. Final nail in the coffin is spotting the gear selector shaft is snapped off. I'm sure it's not beyond saving, but it'd want to be a LOT cheaper before I'd take a punt on it.



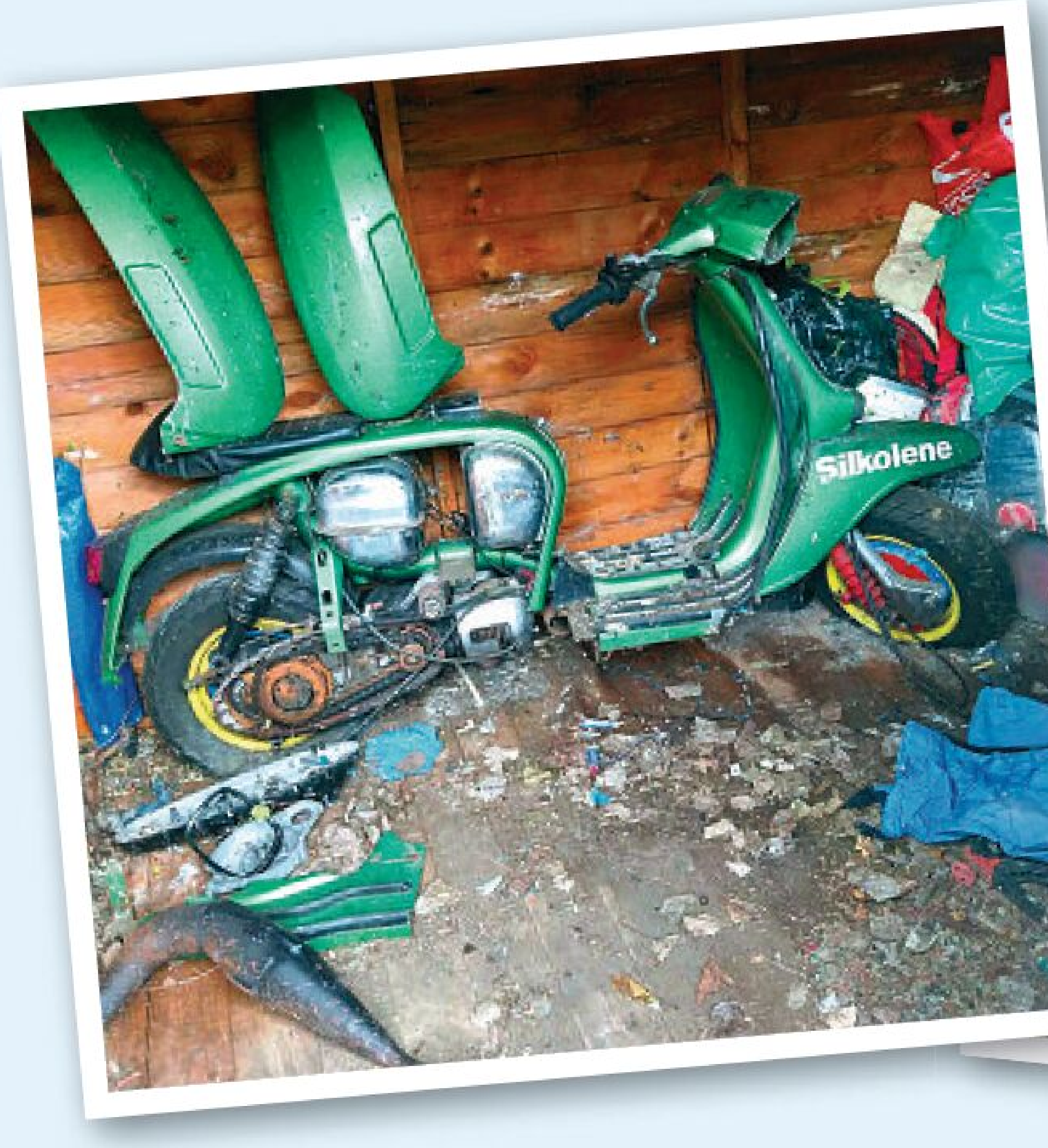
1971 Lambretta GP125

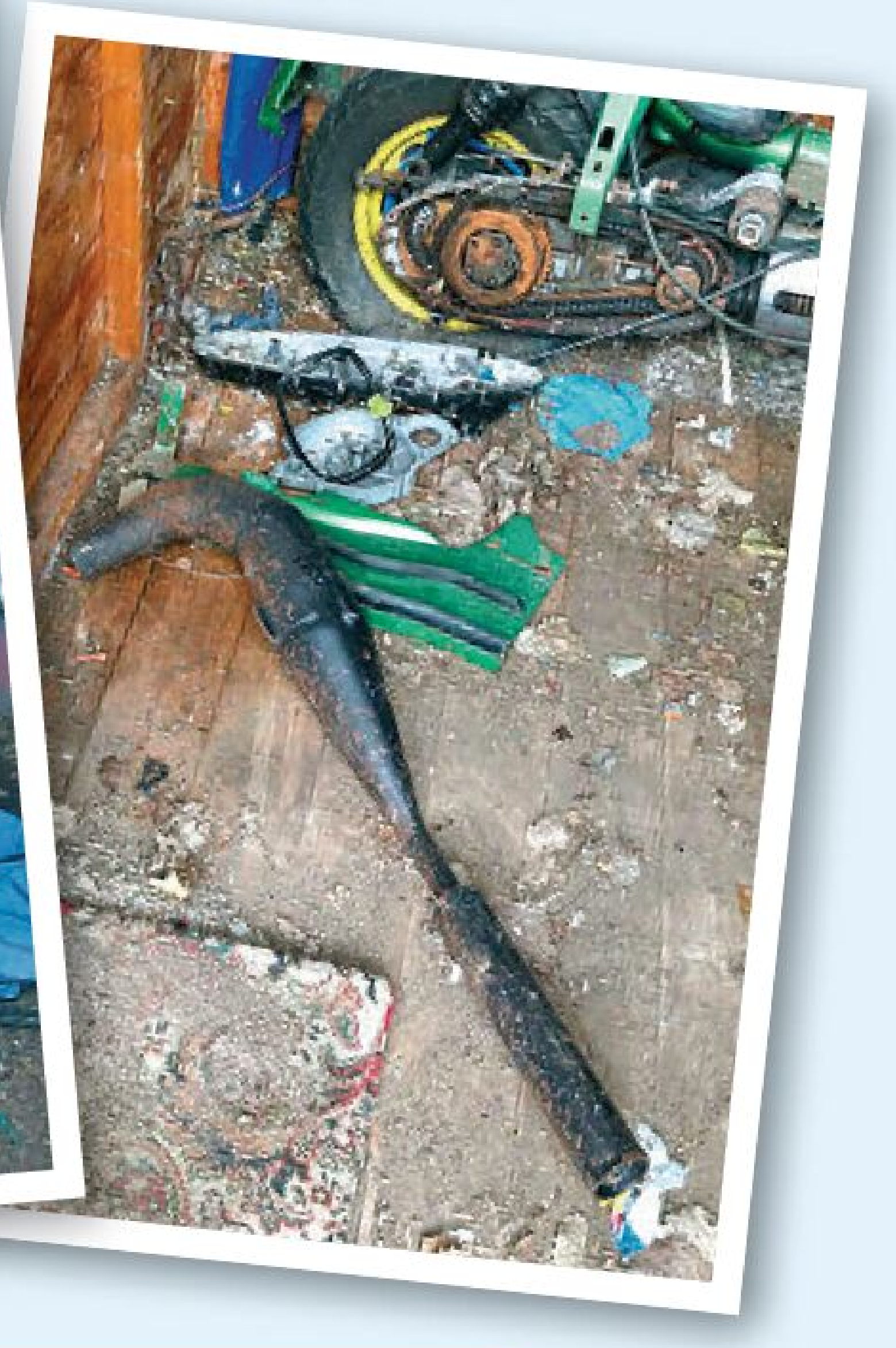
Asking: £3000

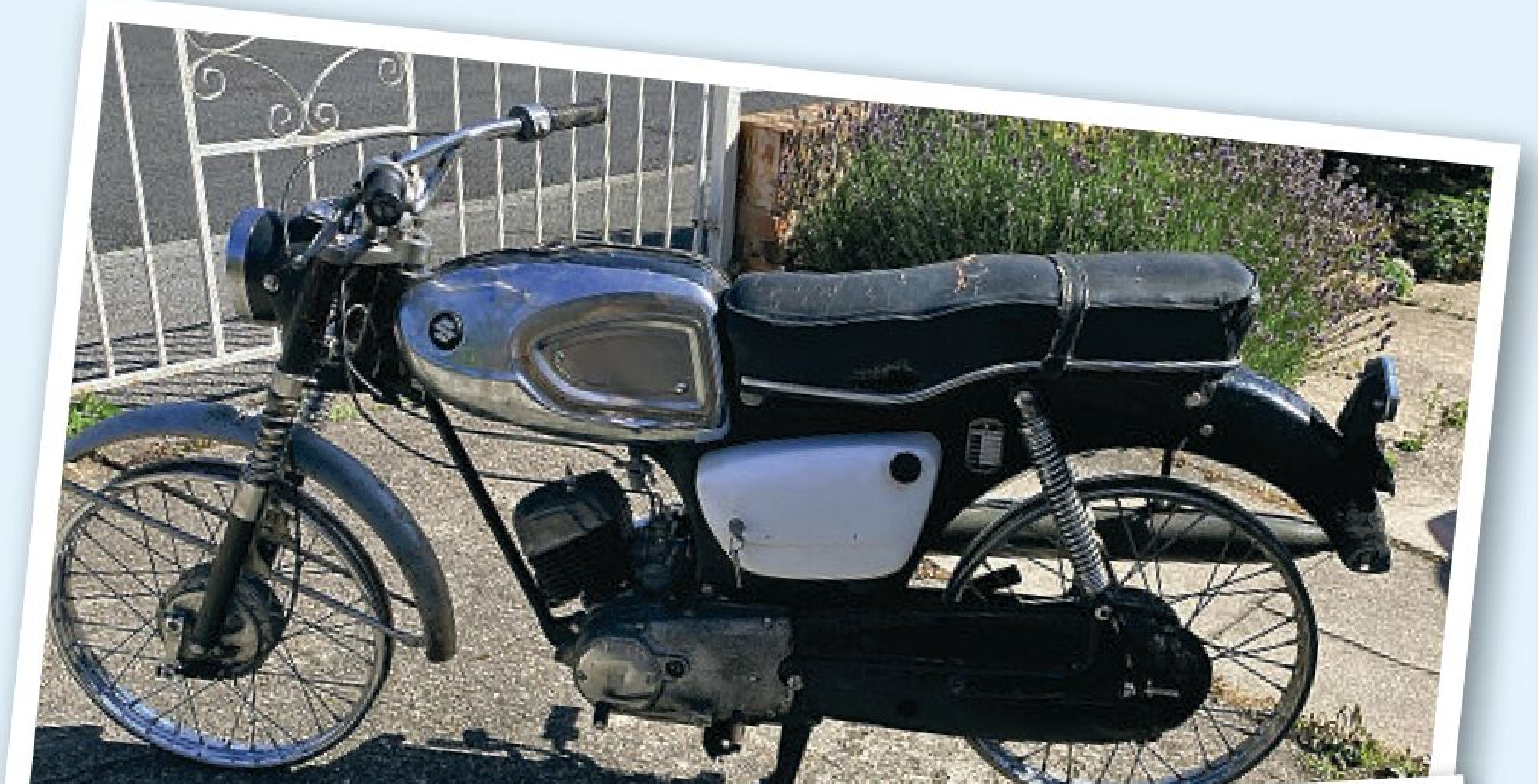
Maybe I'm being a bit picky, but if someone's asking me to cough up three large for a bike (or anything else for that matter) then I want to see them put in a bit of effort. But no... The seller couldn't even be arsed to drag this poor scooter out of the leaky shed where it's obviously been mouldering away for years. 'I no what there worth,' states the ad.

Maybe he does and given that this has a heavily modified 225cc reed-valve motor and some other tasty parts, maybe it is worth a bit more than the average GP125 (good standard ones can easily go for three grand or more). Who knows, maybe it's even got a five-speed gearbox conversion as well – popular with the bigger engine.

He'd still have had a better chance of getting shot of it if he'd spent 10 minutes getting it out into the open, pumping up the tyres, hosing off the debris and refitting the bodywork and transmission covers. 0/10 for effort.







1963 Suzuki Sport 80 K11

Asking: £196

Not sure I've ever seen one of these in Blighty, and this particular one has only recently arrived – brought in from the US and not yet registered although it does have a Nova certificate.

There were several variations on this theme in the early to mid-1960s, when Suzuki was benefitting from the two-stroke know-how brought to its race team by East German defector Ernst Degner.

Making just 7bhp or thereabouts, this little 80cc four-speed wasn't going to win any races, but at a featherweight 75 kilos it was perky enough as a commuter. Also, it had a semi-automatic gearbox – no clutch, just stamp on the pedal and go, like a Honda C90 – so it was easy to ride.

This particular one's been on eBay several times now, with a best bid of just under £200 failing to reach the reserve price.

If I were the seller, I'd fit a set of cheap tyres to it before trying again – something about the bare rims makes it appear more of a basket case than it really is, especially as the engine's been completely rebuilt and is ready to go.

MAYBE NOT… EH?

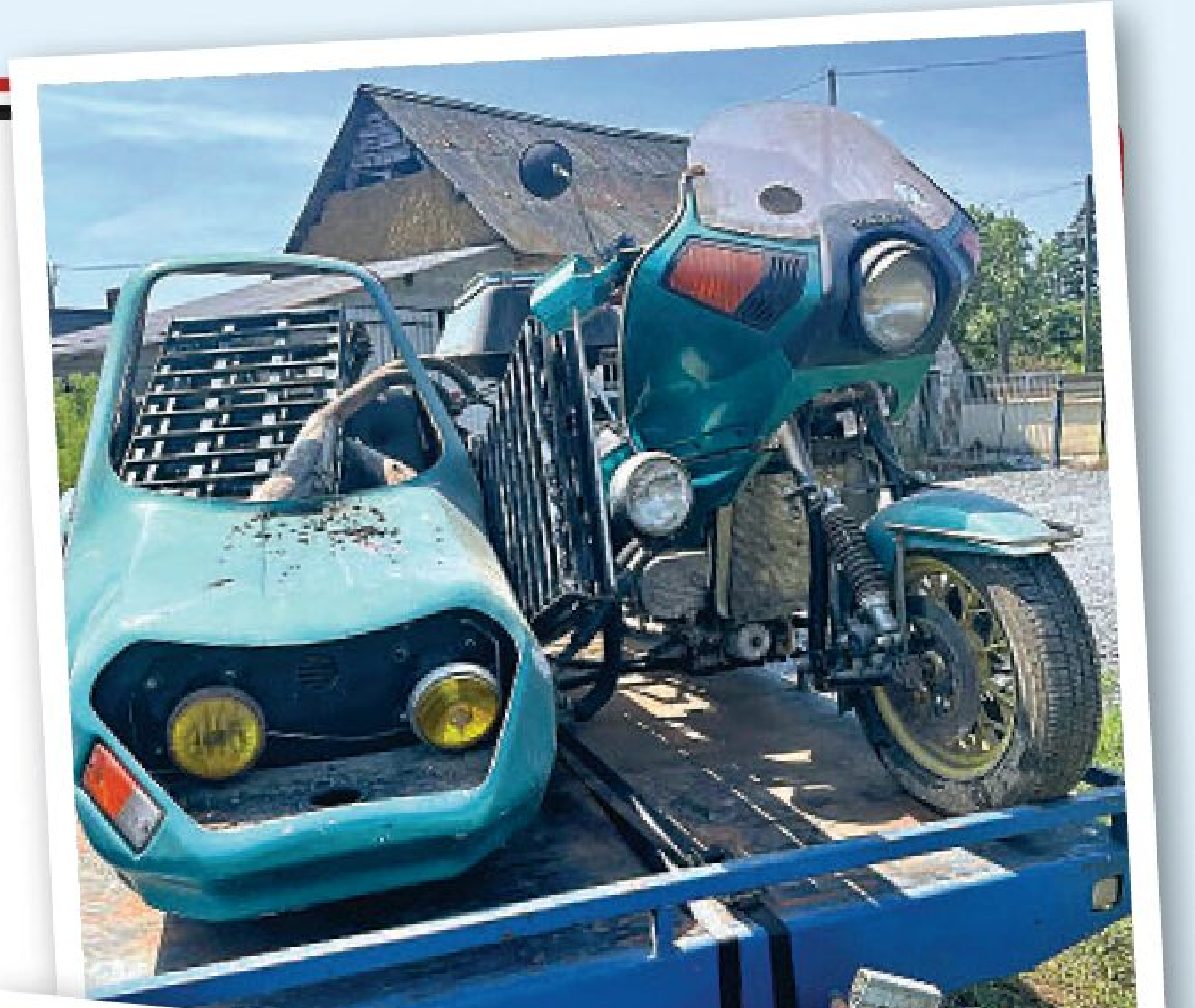
1982 Honda GL1100 Goldwing

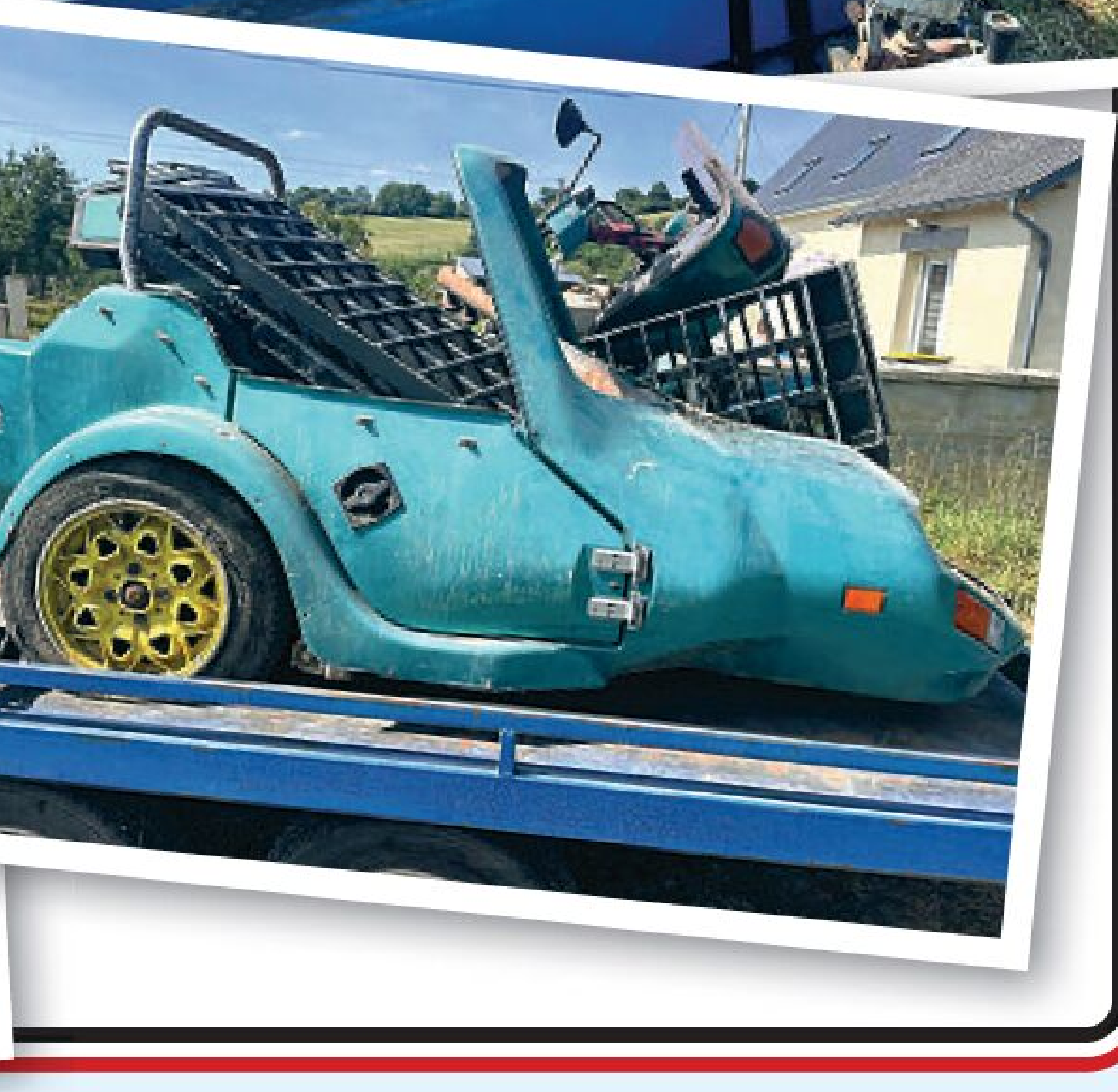
Asking... £565

I keep a folder on my PC where I file away ads I've seen which I think look interesting for these pages. Sometimes, as in this case, I find them again later and wonder exactly what strength of glue I was on when I clicked 'save'.

Nothing against old 'Wings, I should say – fantastically comfy and reliable. They do often seem to attract the kind of owners who would probably be just as happy with a car though – or possibly a Winnebago motorhome. If it's not large, unwieldy trailers, then it's usually big, ugly sidecars like this. Sometimes both. I've never really got the whole sidecar thing anyway but hey-ho – takes all sorts.

I suspect that a 'Wing enthusiast could get this up and running again without too much bother, although it does seem to be missing its fuel tank and seats. More likely it'll end up as spares though. You could probably make a few quid back flogging the chair off as a kiddies' fairground ride...





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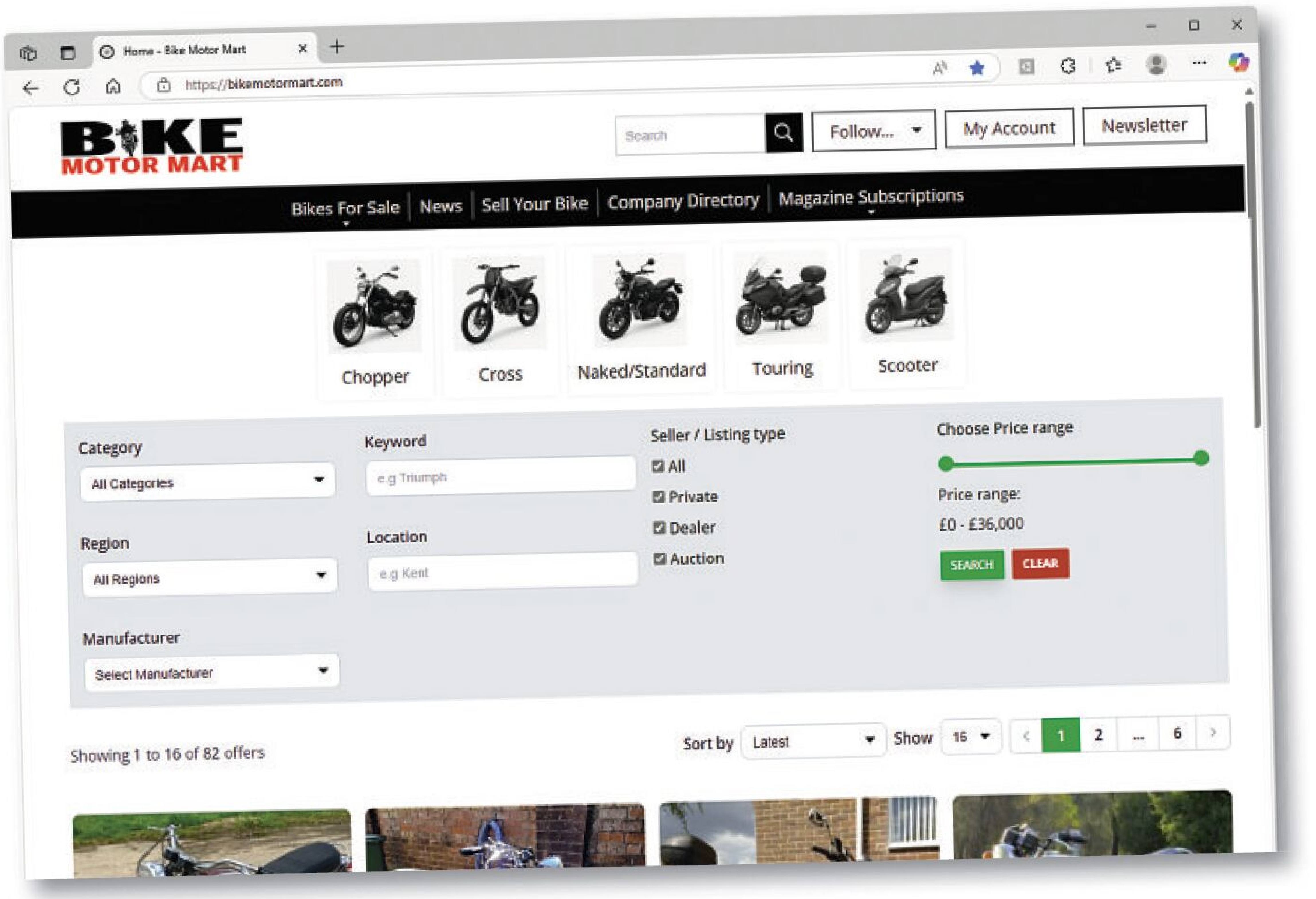

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For Sale

Armstrong MT500

1995, Ex Mod, new MoT and just serviced, new tyres x 2, battery and other work, original exhaust and panniers, very good condition, £2150 ono. Please call 07424065312
1306

BSA Bantam Gear Change Lever

splines ok, £10, Pitmans Book of the Royal Enfield by WC Haycraft, all 4 stroke, singles 1944 to 1958, slightly tatty, readable, £5. Please call 01299266565
1230

BSA Bantam Petrol Tank

model D5 or D7 complete with filler cap/oil measure petrol tap chrome centre strip solid no rust inside/outside, alas dent on left side easily repaired, £50. Please call 01268735135
1239

Bikelug Trailer

motorcycle trailer, single, can be dismantled without tools ideal for storage, can fit inside small van etc, built in loading ramp, all electrics no longer used, £450 ono. Please call 01268735135
915

Bridgestone BS100 Sport

1968, non runner needs a new piston and barrel plating, over £1000 spent on new parts ie wheels, tyre, seat, engine parts and wiring loom plus load of other spares from the USA unable to finish the job V5, £950. Please call 07929747650
1113

Ducati Monster

1999, M600 Dark, 24,400 miles, good running order, history back to new, MoT August 2026, £2400 ono. Please call 07553536212
1228

Harley-Davidson Dyna SG

2013, 110th Anniversary Super Glide custom, 1585cc, MoT August 2026, colour bronze, black, 10,807 miles, excellent condition, £8995 cash on collection. Please call 07810888956, Derbyshire
1231

Honda 50 Sport

1965, £2,000, good condition, runs ok, only one previous owner. Please call 07463541606
943

Honda CB200

1976, £2,500, original UK bike, lovely condition, owners manual and keys, Avon tyres, runs well. Please call 01245322189
1074

Honda CB360

1974, £3,000, 1974, mint just had major service 11,300 miles, original hand book and workshop manual, rides perfect you will not be disappointed, contact for details. Please call 01443226706
1309

Honda CB500

1995, £1,350, 1995, good condition, top box, matching panniers, heated grips, screen, 47,000 miles, only 3 owners, just had a full service by S and D Motorcycles. Please call 07463541606
1304

Honda CB750

1975, in excellent condition, tax and MoT exempt, UK bike, 27,000 miles, good colour, genuine reason for sale, £6000 ono. Please call 07546034695
1240

Honda CB400/4

1976, £2,750, 1976, blue, full rebuild using new and old parts, Piper exhaust, new coils, front tyre, rear brake shoes, carbs, new kits fitted, good condition. Please call 07927245949
1076

Honda CBF300

2018, £4,000. 5,971 miles, MoT April 2026, full service full tank of petrol, valeted, good runner, paperwork, very good condition, 2 keys. Please call 01158755159
1283

Honda CG125

2001, 2001, blue, kickstart, CDI, new MoT, tyres x 2, battery, brakes, very good condition, £1100 ono. Please call 07424065312
1307

Honda CX500

1978, 1,500. 1978, good condition, running order, quiet engine, 50 plus oil pressure, tax, MoT exempt, not used much, low miles. Please call 07548028097
1101

Honda Forza

2023, £3,299, FSH, garaged, nice condition, 2 keys, great maxi scooter, full auto belt drive, 95 mpg. Please call 07784499299
914

Honda Forza 350

2022, £3,200, only 1100 miles. Please call 07952708067
1303

Honda Rebel

2018, £4,150, excellent condition, like new, red tank, full MoT, service history, 6250 comfortable miles, two panniers and top box. Please call 01366383941
1226

Honda VF10000R

1985, £2,000, project, 25,000 miles, tax and tested, running, new pistons, many new parts and custom parts, historic tax class, needs paint. Please call 07928808057
1075

Kawasaki 750 Zephyr

1991, £150, frame with V5 wiring loom, 4 into 1 exhaust. Please call 07981367294
1308

Lexmoto Arizona 125cc

2012, £1,100, MoT due May 2026, alloy wheels and heated grips, good overall condition for the year, tyres, brakes and chain are nearly new, only 10 bhp, but ideal for a learner, a loyal little run-around and only £26 road tax, full A licence causes sale. South Liverpool 07933 893431 Pete. Please call 07803988983, Merseyside
1213

Moped
2021, £777. Ideal for starters, good condition, valid MoT, 2 keys, starts and drives nicely. Please call 07741397000, Lincolnshire
1295

Moto Guzzi California

1996, 1100icc, 29,000 miles, on Sorn, MoT May 2026, new leather upholstery, spot lights and much more, £3250 ovno. Please call 01205760322
1227

Motolug Trailer
Motolug collapsible single motorcycle trailer, dismantles quickly without tools, ideal for storage/transporting in a small van, estate car etc, built in loading ramp, lights number board, no longer used, £450. Please call 01268735135
1238

Paddock Stands

2006, £95, Ducati S2R Monster paddock stands, 2006, front and rear, very good condition. Please call 01208863590
1305

SYM 125
2010, mint condition, 8 months MoT, only 3500km, only used on sunny days. Please call 07778742954
1243

Silencers
Triumph Thunderbird pair original factory peashooter silencers, rear section excellent condition, off low mileage bike, no rust corrosion, undamaged, £500 collection only. New chrome sprocket cover boxed, £300 plus £7 postage. Please call 07434513161
1232

Suzuki 350T Rebel
£5,995, two stroke, K reg, one owner, California import, now British registered, superb condition. Please call 07883077061
912

Suzuki Bandit
1997, £3,995, USA import, dry stored 10 years, approx 81,000km. Please call 07519818549
917

Suzuki GSXR600

£4,000, 2002, 34,677 miles, runs beautifully, full tank of petrol has full service, MoT and new battery. Please call 01158755159
1282

Suzuki Manual
Suzuki Service Manual for B100P 120 model, dated 1965, very clean, can post at cost, make me an offer. Please call 07929747650
1112

Suzuki RGV250 VJ22M

1991, £9,000, 1991, plus std parts and works manual, too much to list, ring for details. Please call 07597614456
1284

Vetter Windjammer Fairing
black with headlight, indicators, horns, lower panels, wiring connectors, very good condition with mounting frame, needs bead blasting and painting, glove compartments, locking and presstops, £250 collection only. Please call 07434513161
1235

Yamaha FS1-E

1993, £3,500, 1993, two owners from new, complete original, 1885 miles from new, red, very nice condition. Please call 01275830922
1124

Yamaha FXR400
IWG loom, CDI power valve motor radiator, rear subframe, tank cover, carbs, spares only, Honda NSR250 MC16 tank, fairing, seat plastic CDI, Honda TL250 engine for spares. Tel. 07816 043480.
1099

Yamaha FZR1000

1993, £3,100, excellent original condition except braided brake lines, 18,600 miles, owned since 2002, new battery, oil, filter, plugs, have seat hump and tail extension. Please call 07892939675
1061

Yamaha TRX850

£2,750, just had new plugs, air and oil filters, oil flushed and replaced coolant, b/pads, battery, tyres, f/sprocket, starter solenoid, MoT. Please call 01732458601
1062

Yamaha XJ600N

2000, £700, good condition, MoT March 2026, 27,000 miles, reliable work bike. Please call 07522983224
1073

Yamaha XS-750SE
1979, good runner, US import, 16,500 miles, Cruiser bike, stepped seat, handle bars, lot stainless fasteners, 3 discs electronic ignition, braided hoses, valuable Porsche sports car number F1350 or offers. Please call 01708782364
1234

Yamaha XS750SE

1979, Special, metallic black paint, lot of stainless nuts/bolts, free tax and MoT, very good tubeless tyres, 16,500 miles, good runner, valuable Porsche number plate, £1350 or offers. Please call 01708782364
1114

Zongshen Zip-Star 250

£500, 2007, good condition, runs well, low mileage, on Sorn, looks and sounds good. Please call 07869081495
1281

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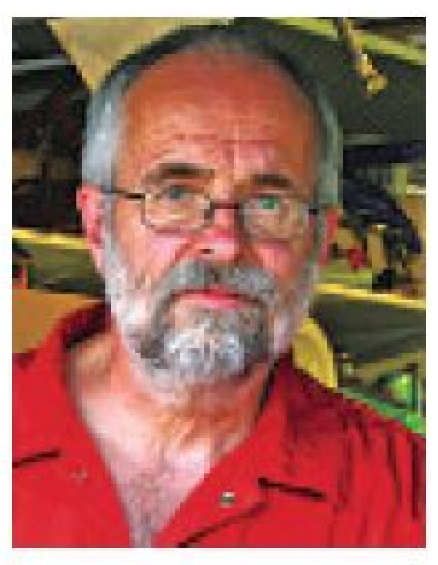
How Mark wants his CB400 Four to look like, when completed!

WORDS AND PICS: **MARK HAYCOCK**

Project Honda CB400 Four Part 6

It's all about timing

Mark is about to button-up the motor but then realises a few vital things need sorting.



So, I'm getting on with the engine and there is a slight 'Oh, by the way' here as I should have explained last time about valve timing: Oops! Sorry!

When fitting the cam-chain, you need to arrange things such that the rather insignificant looking horizontal lines on the sprocket line up with the top of the cylinder head **(Photo 1)** and the timing marks on the auto advance unit line up with the 1 and 4 'top dead centre' mark **(Photo 2)**. I should point out that the sprocket mounting bolts are special parts **(Photo 3)**. They have an unthreaded portion which prevents any movement and are probably of high tensile material, despite being unmarked. No washers are fitted and I would advise using high-strength locking fluid, just in case.

Now we come to the top cover and here the design is interesting in that the rockers are held here rather than the cylinder head. I have kept the rockers as pairs on their shafts **(Photo 4)** in separate identified bags. The springs take up free play to quieten the valve gear and here I am afraid the Honda manual once again has a mistake.

It shows that all the springs of each pair are on the outside, so the exhaust rockers look like this **(Photo 5)**. This is incorrect. The springs should be mounted next to the raised diameter portion of the casting so the pairs of rockers for each cylinder (inlet and exhaust) look like this **(Photo 6)**. The exhaust is on the right here.

Before we fit the cover, you see that small diameter bar in **Photo 7**? It is actually one of a pair of tubes with very small holes drilled **(Photo 8)**. They are, of course, to provide a constant supply of oil to each cam and the mountings have different diameters to make sure they line up properly.

The cover is sealed by a large O-ring rather than an old-fashioned gasket, but Honda want you to use sealing compound as well. I realised that this must be simply

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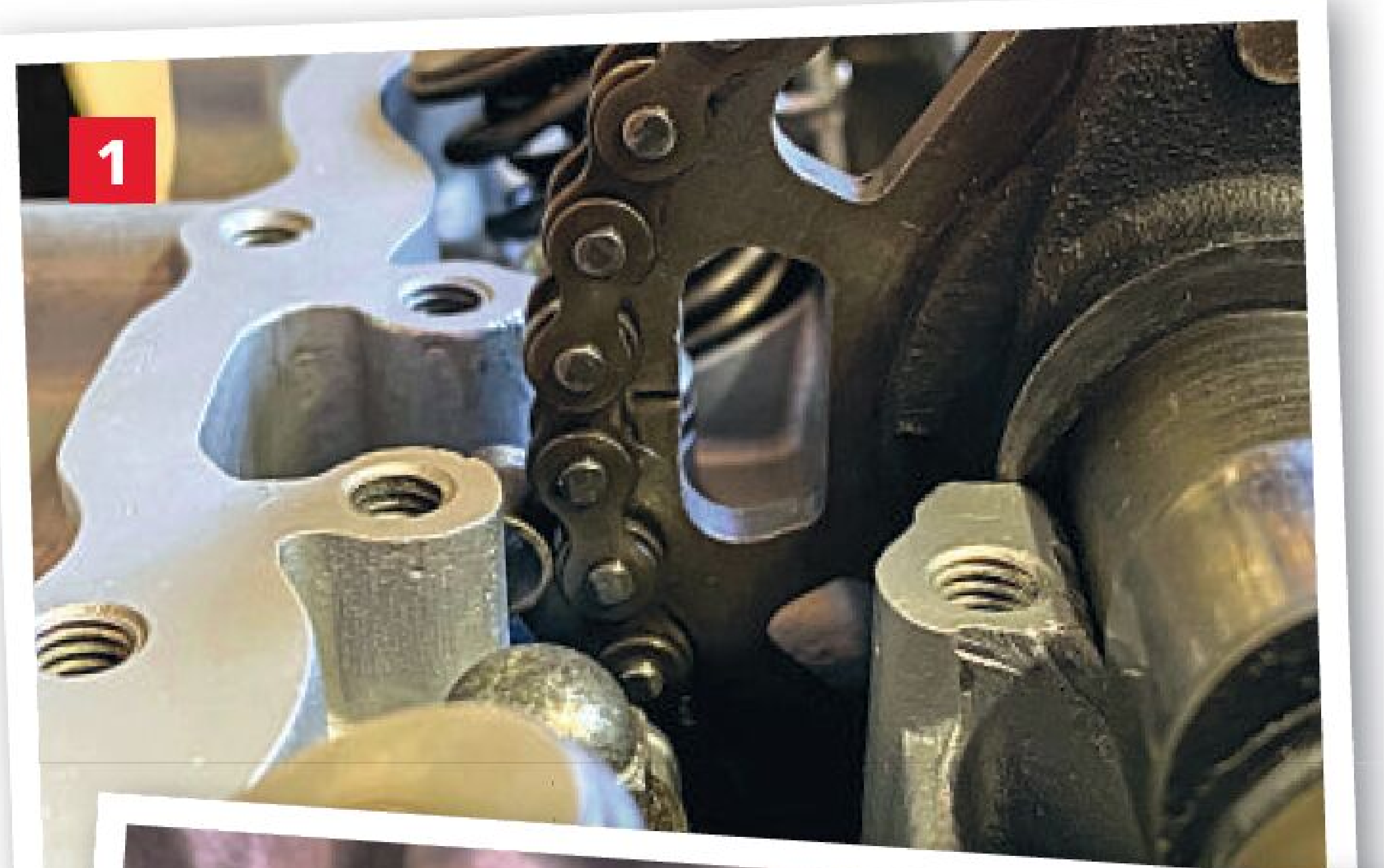

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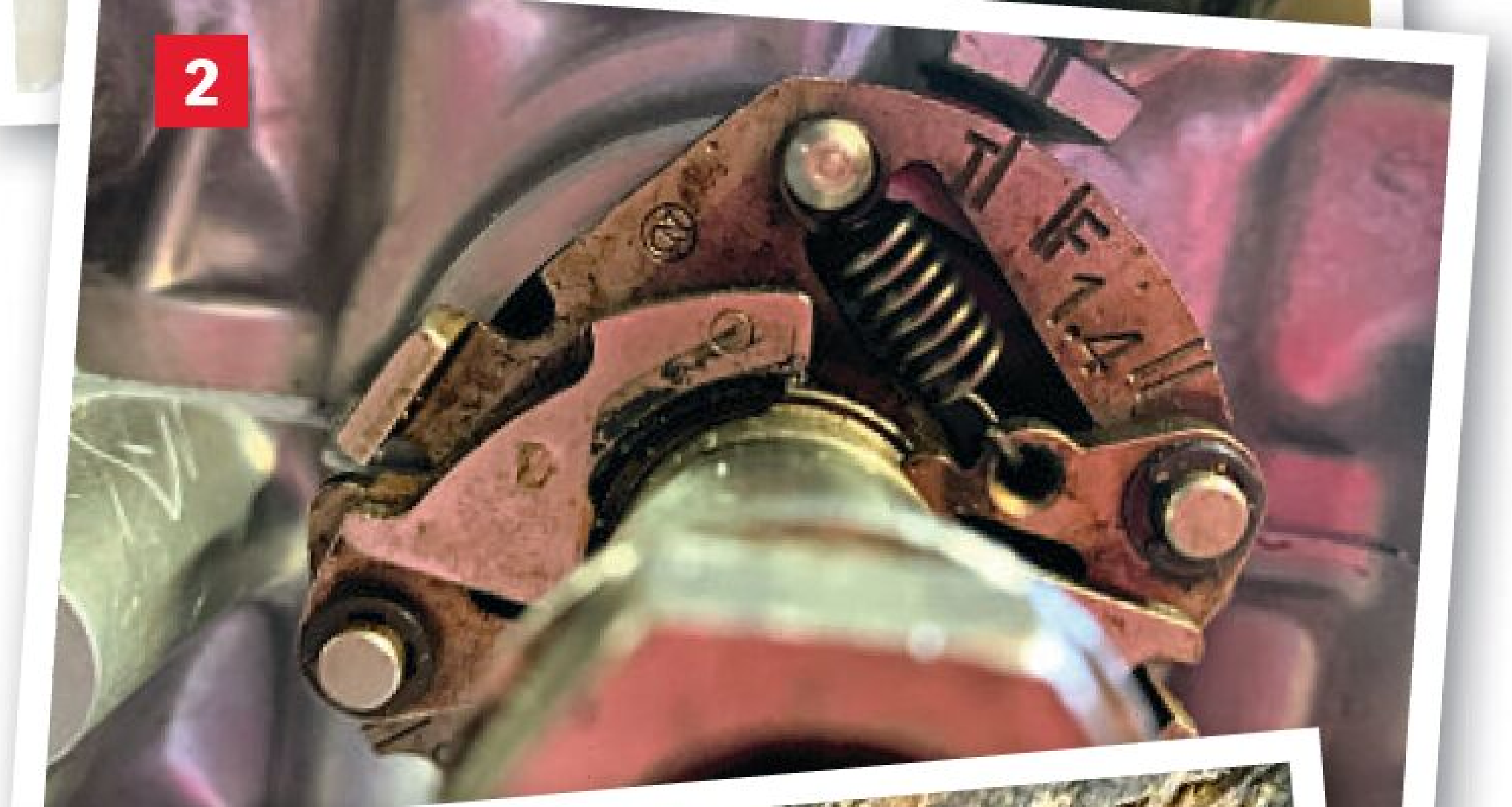

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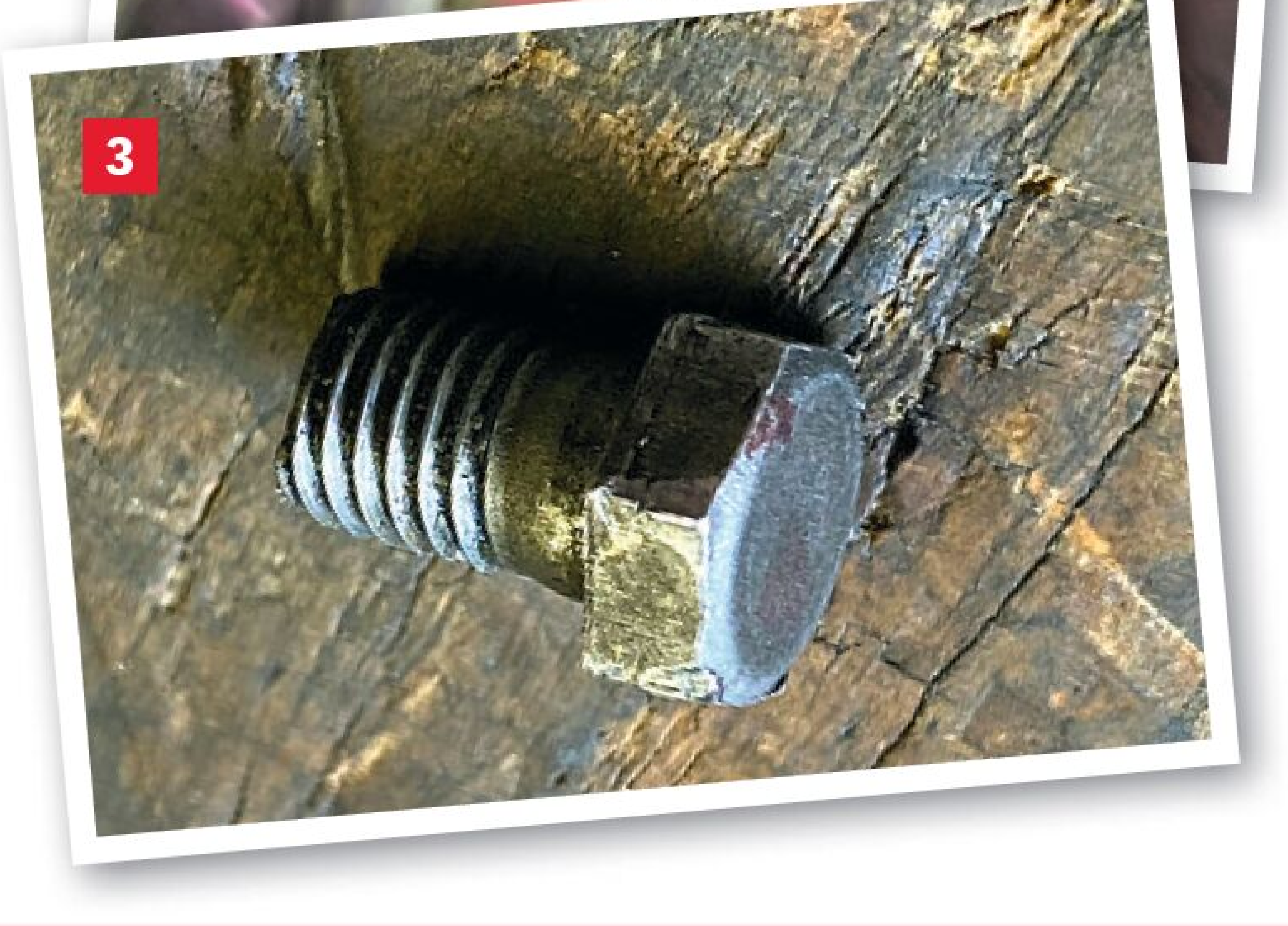

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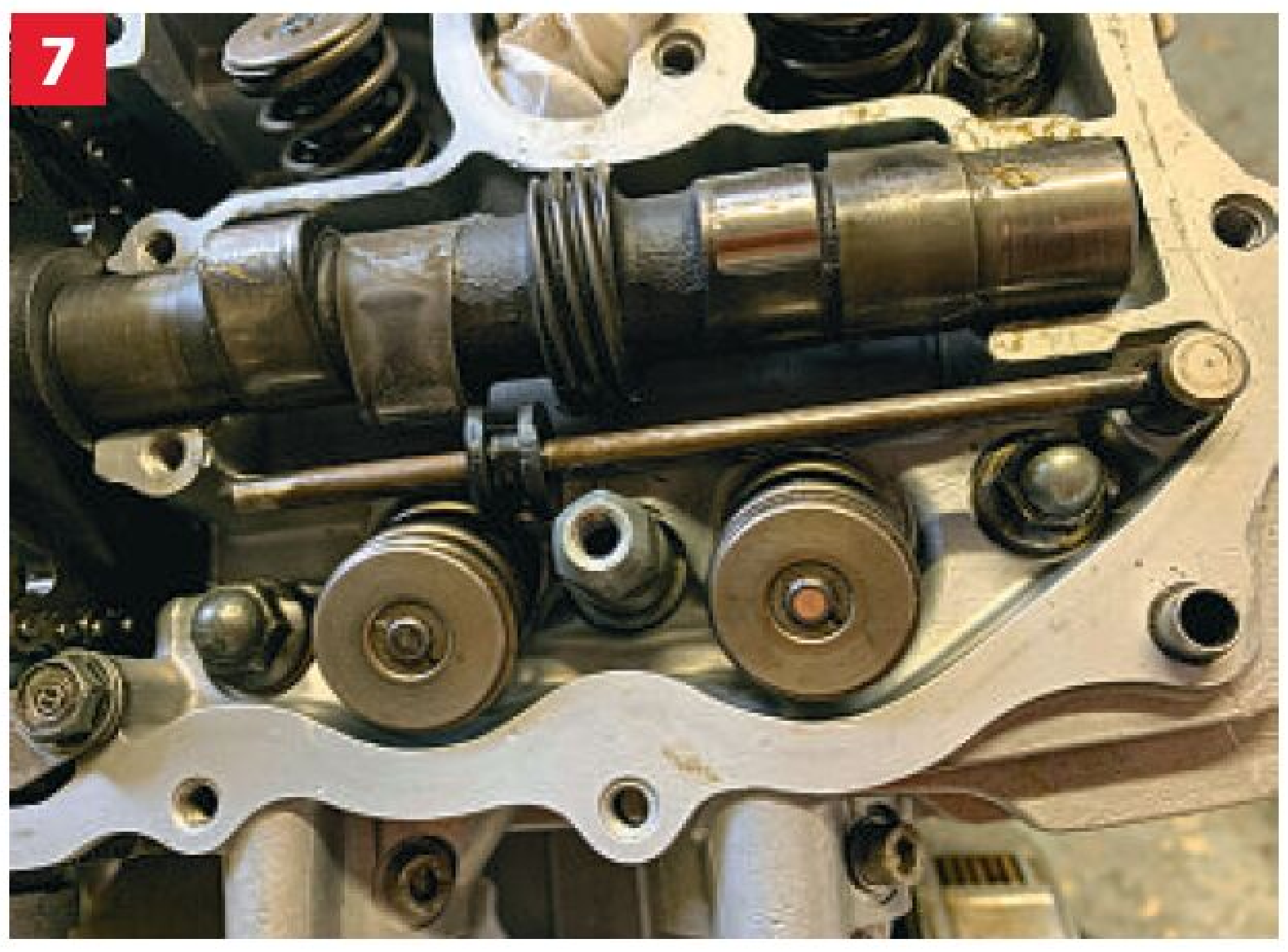
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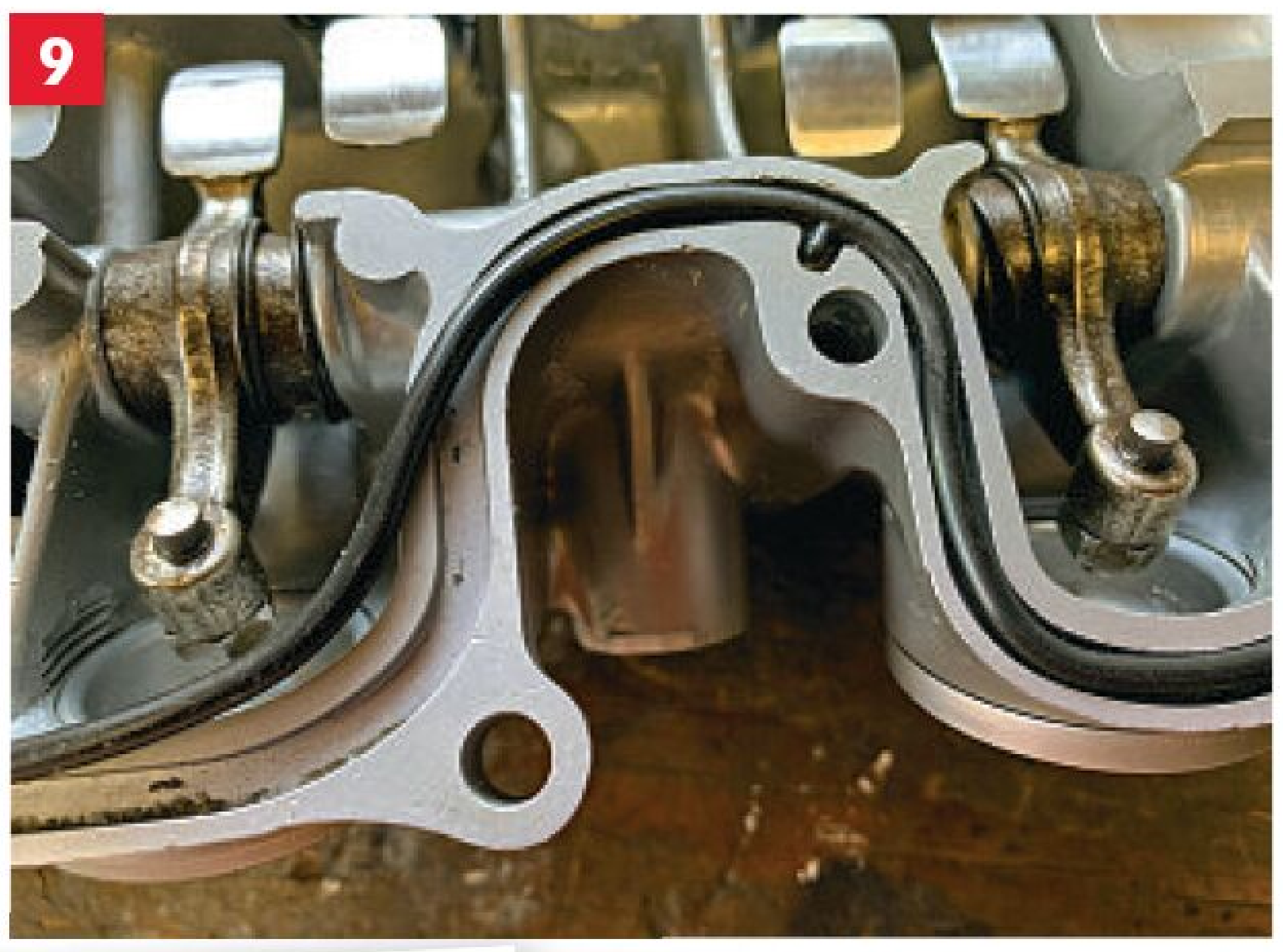
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to hold it in place, so stuck it down with little dots of the correct type of superglue instead. The O-ring has little nibs to show how it fits **(Photo 9)**. As you can see, the top cover is held on by about 500 small cap screws **(Photo 10)** just to make sure of a seal, so wouldn't it be annoying if you forgot to put in the little oil pipes? Yes, it would.

But then, supposing you found later that you had also forgotten to put in the drive for the tachometer and checked that yes, it cannot be put in from outside? It is held in place by a circlip **(Photo 11)**. It will need a new oil seal put in from the outside **(Photo 12)**. One other thing that could be forgotten is that there are three plugs which seal various oil ways which need to be put back in place. **Photo 13** shows the location for one of them. They were removed so that everything could be jet-washed out to ensure they were clear of blasting material.

The clutch cover **(Photo14)** needs a couple of oil seals for the kick-start shaft and external clutch operating assembly **(Photo 15)**. The latter is the type which uses three ball bearings between two tracks. This superseded the coarse screw thread type and it does reduce friction and hence lever force. There is a sealing O-ring on the screw adjuster **(Photo 16)** which appeared to be perfectly okay. I found the mechanism a bit fiddly to assemble correctly as there are six ways to do it

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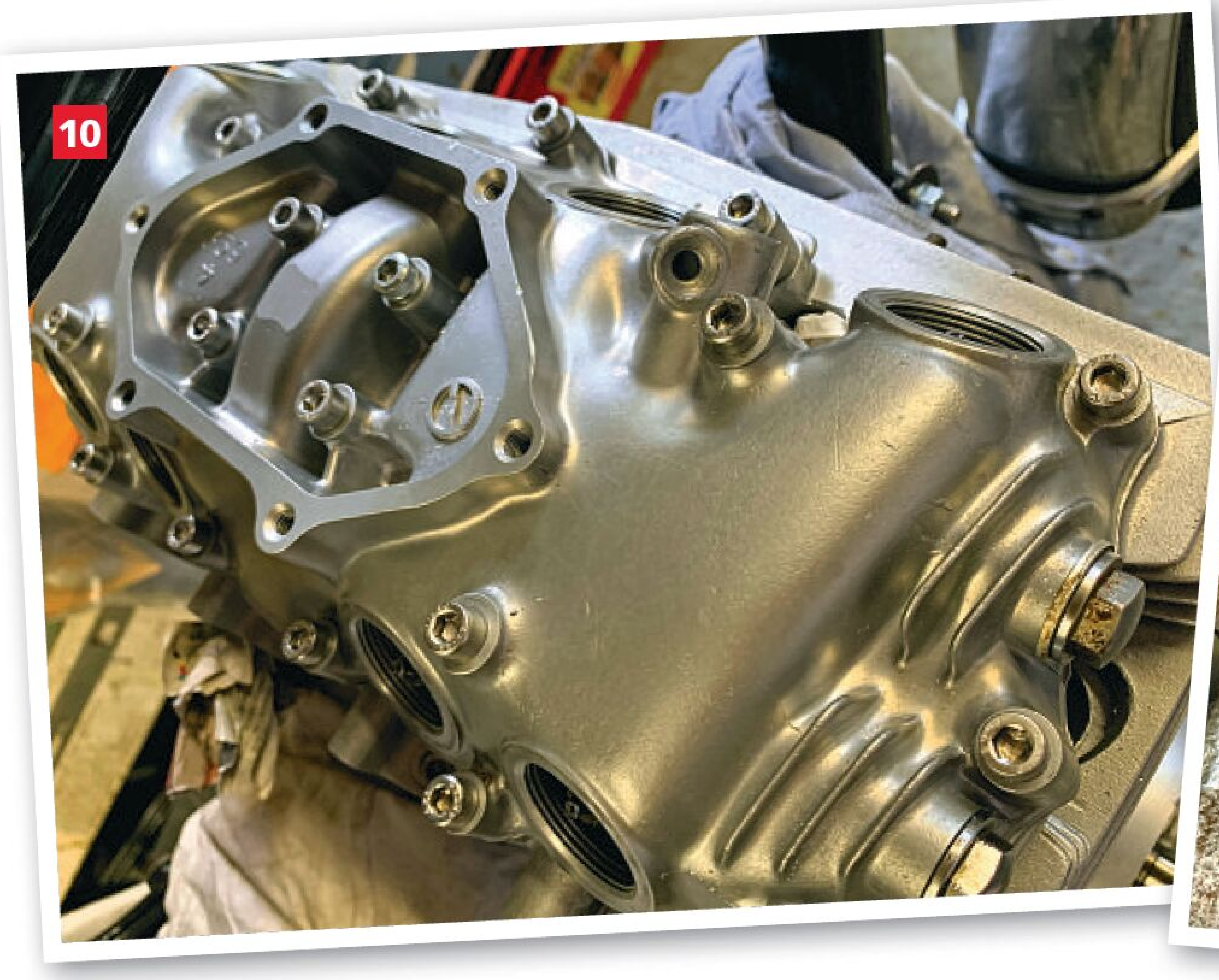
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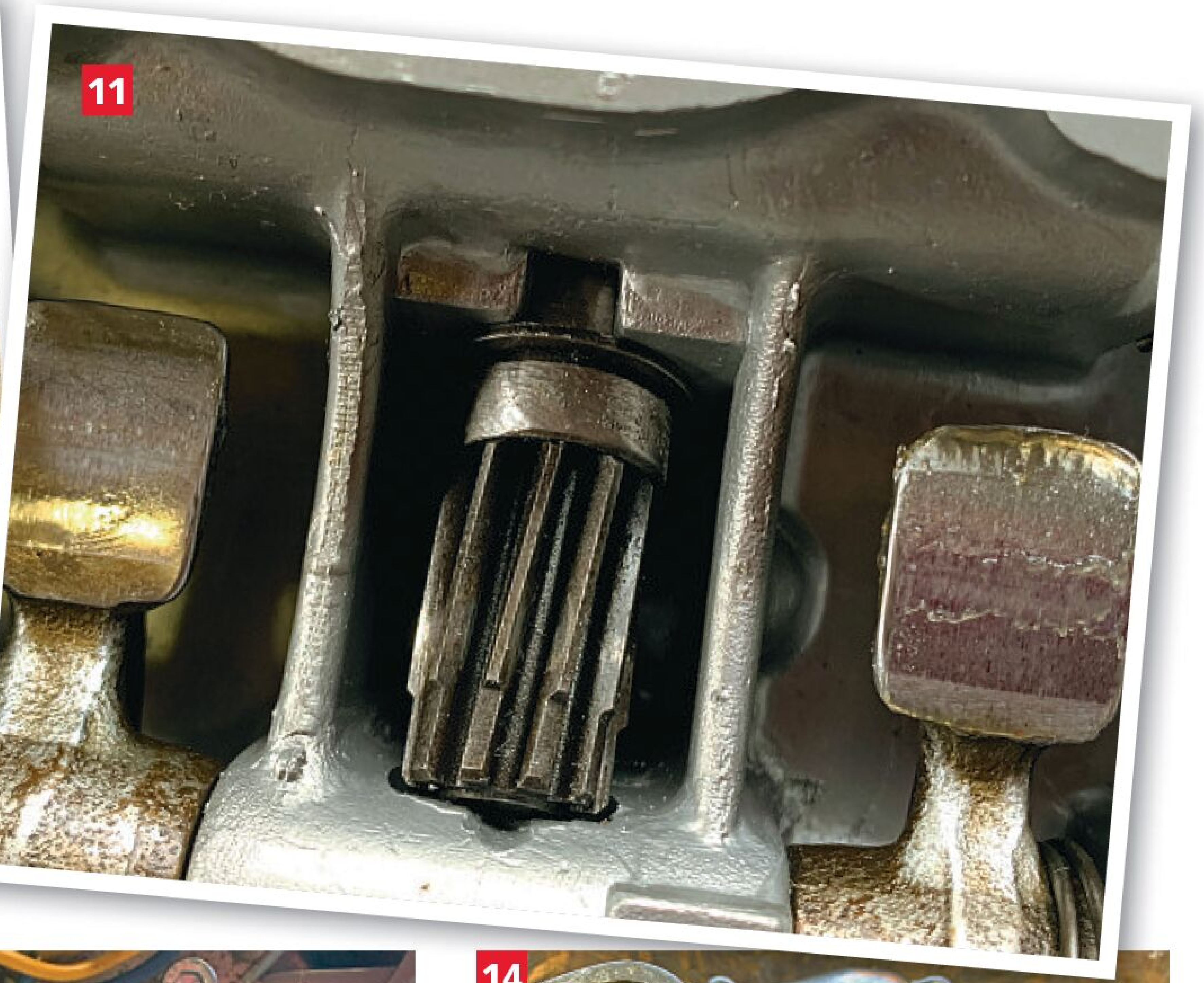
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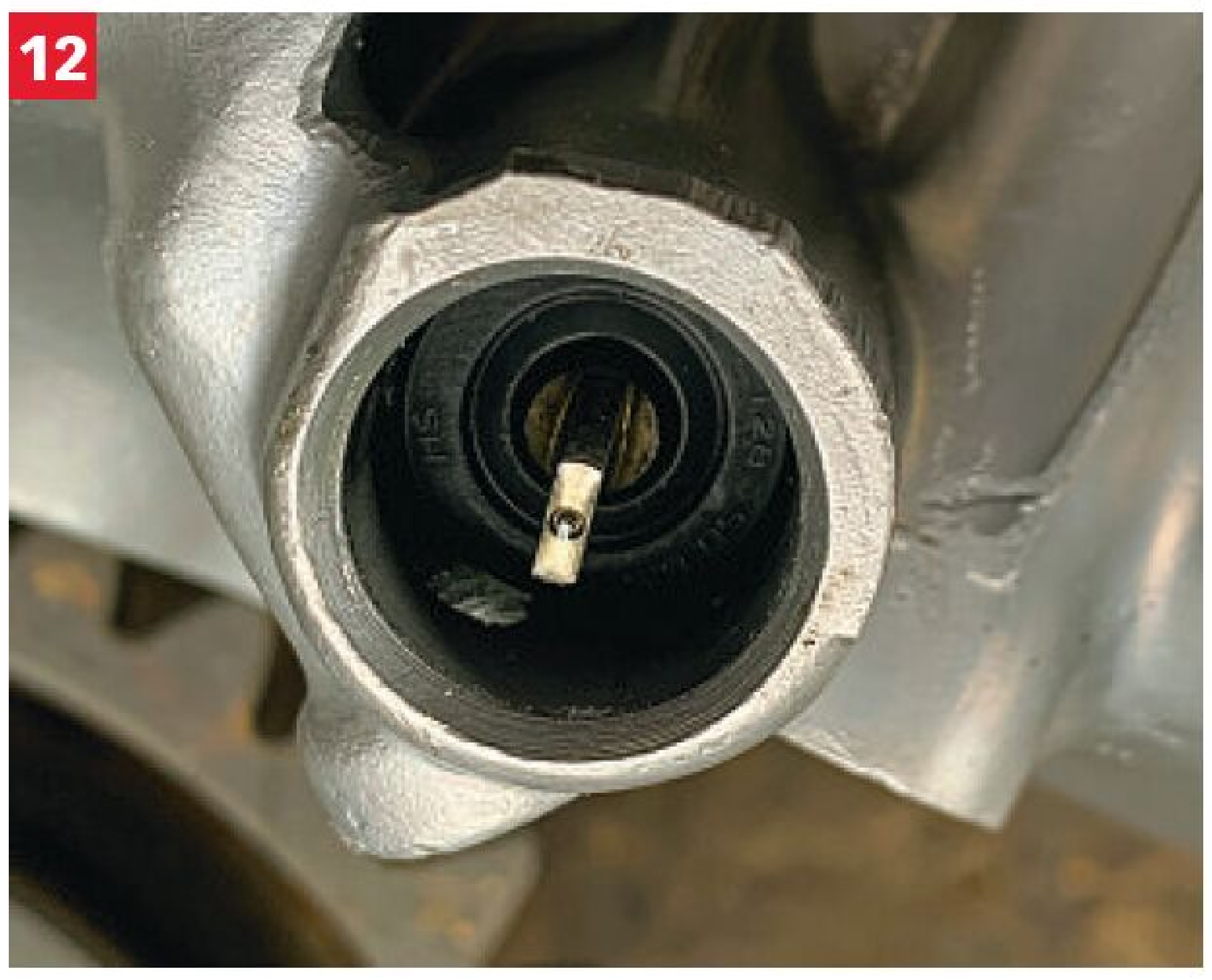
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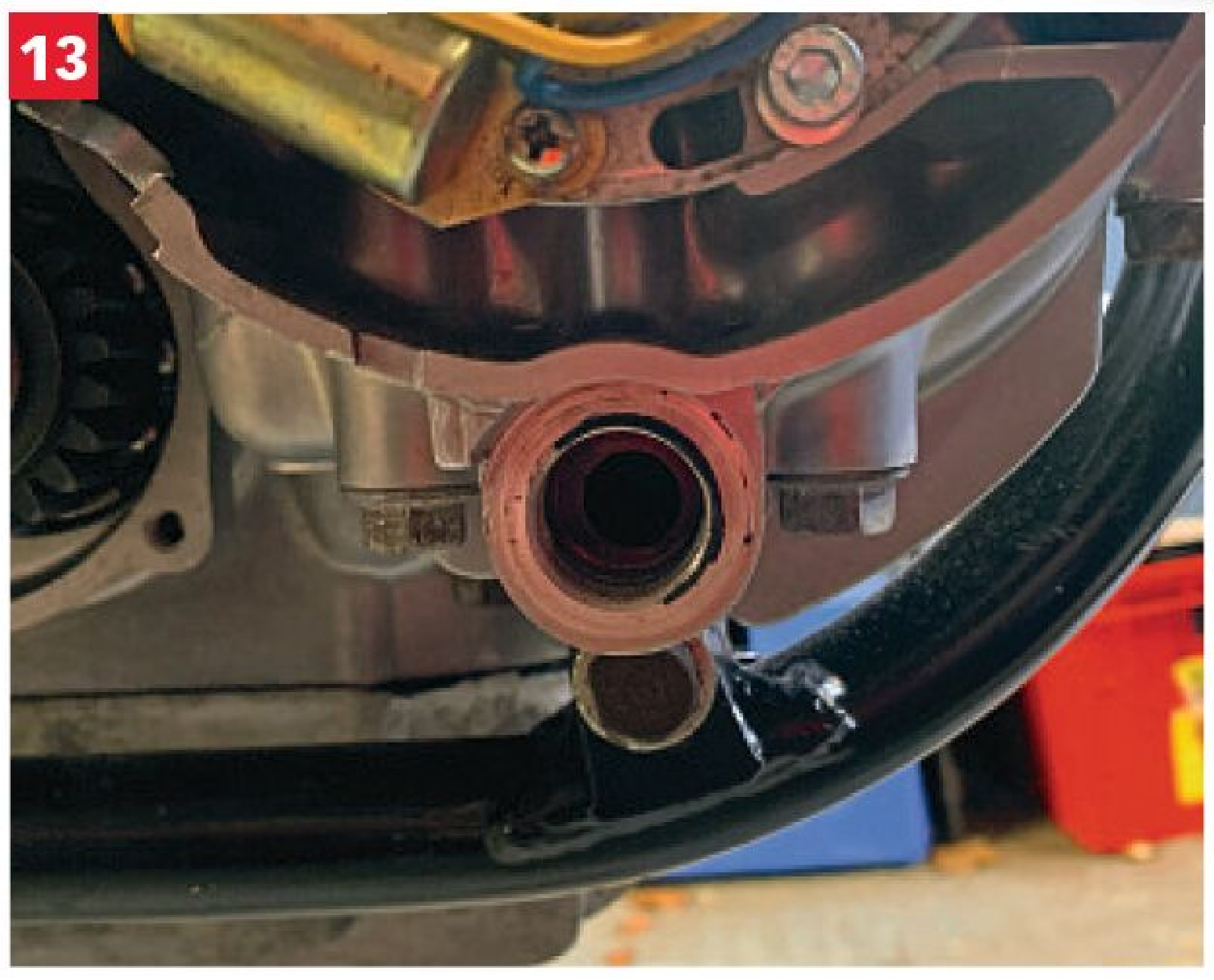
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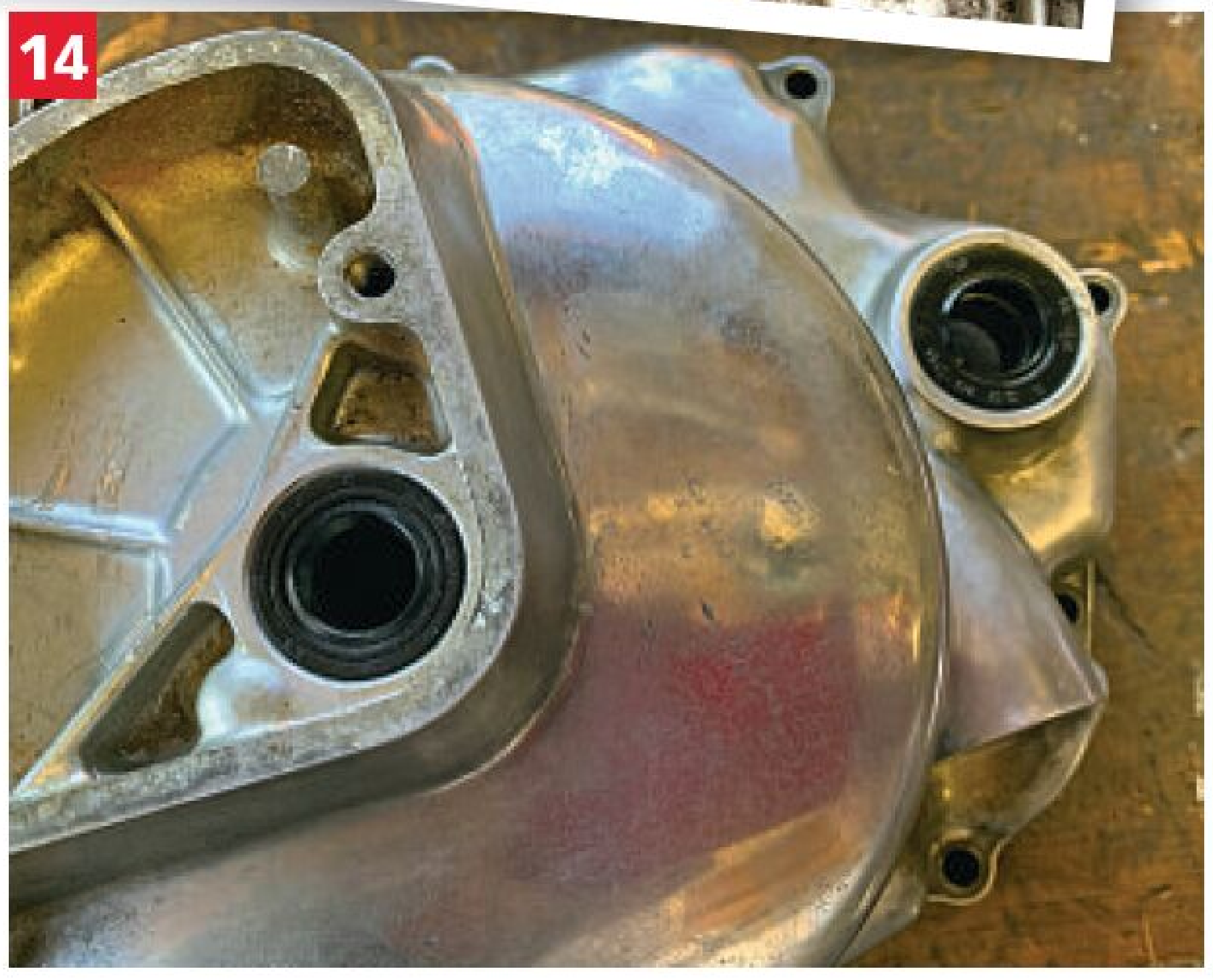
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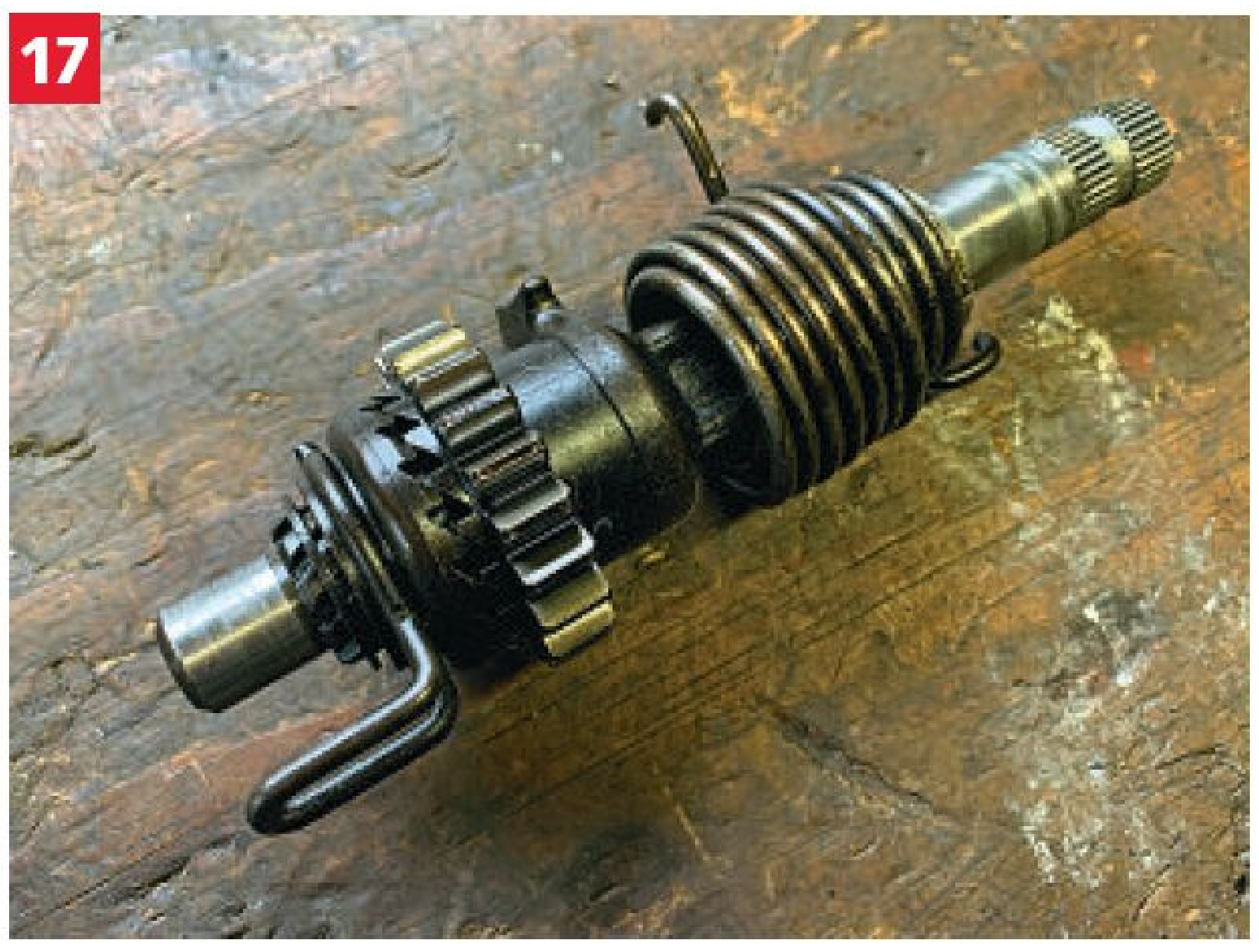

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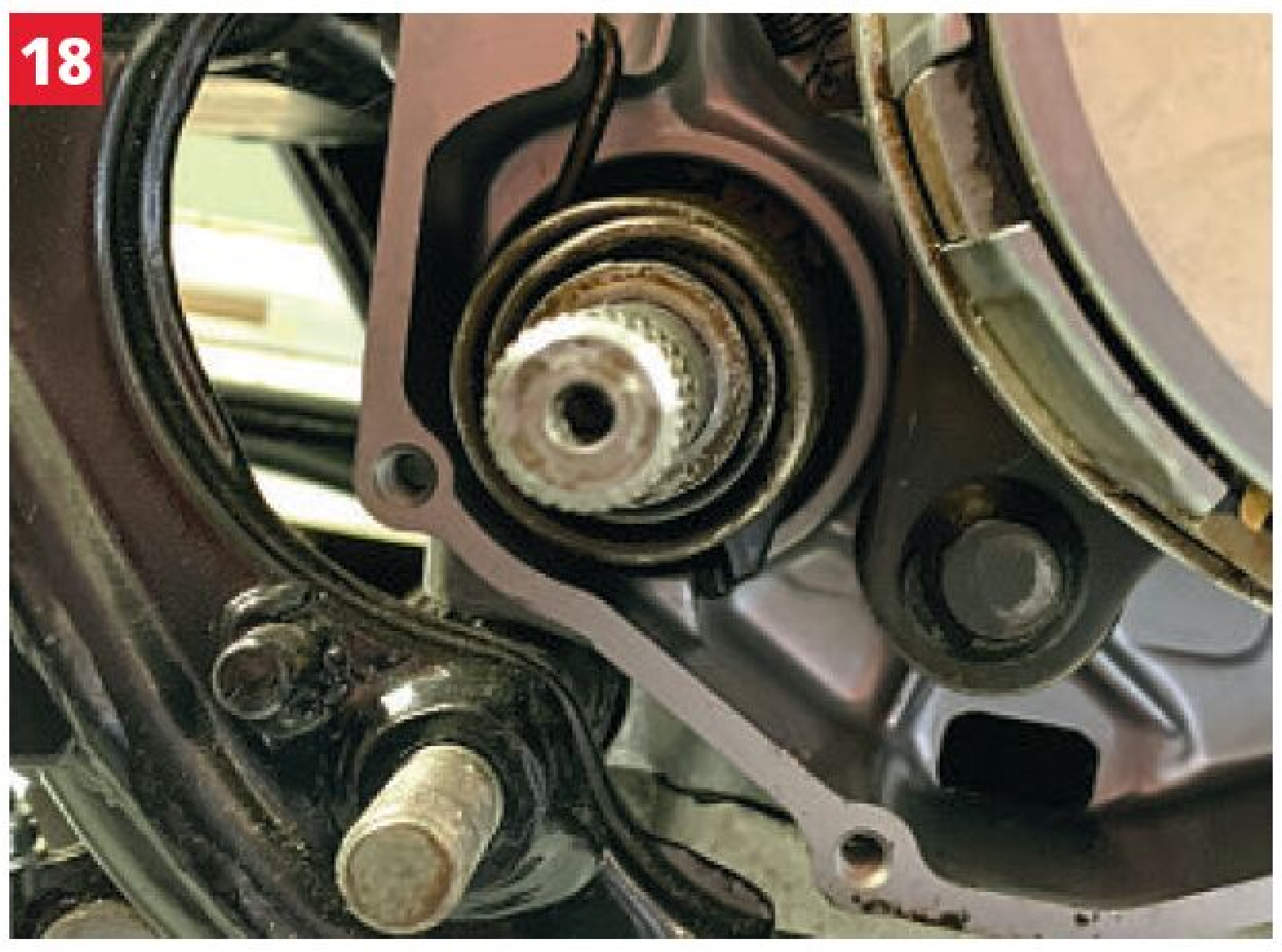

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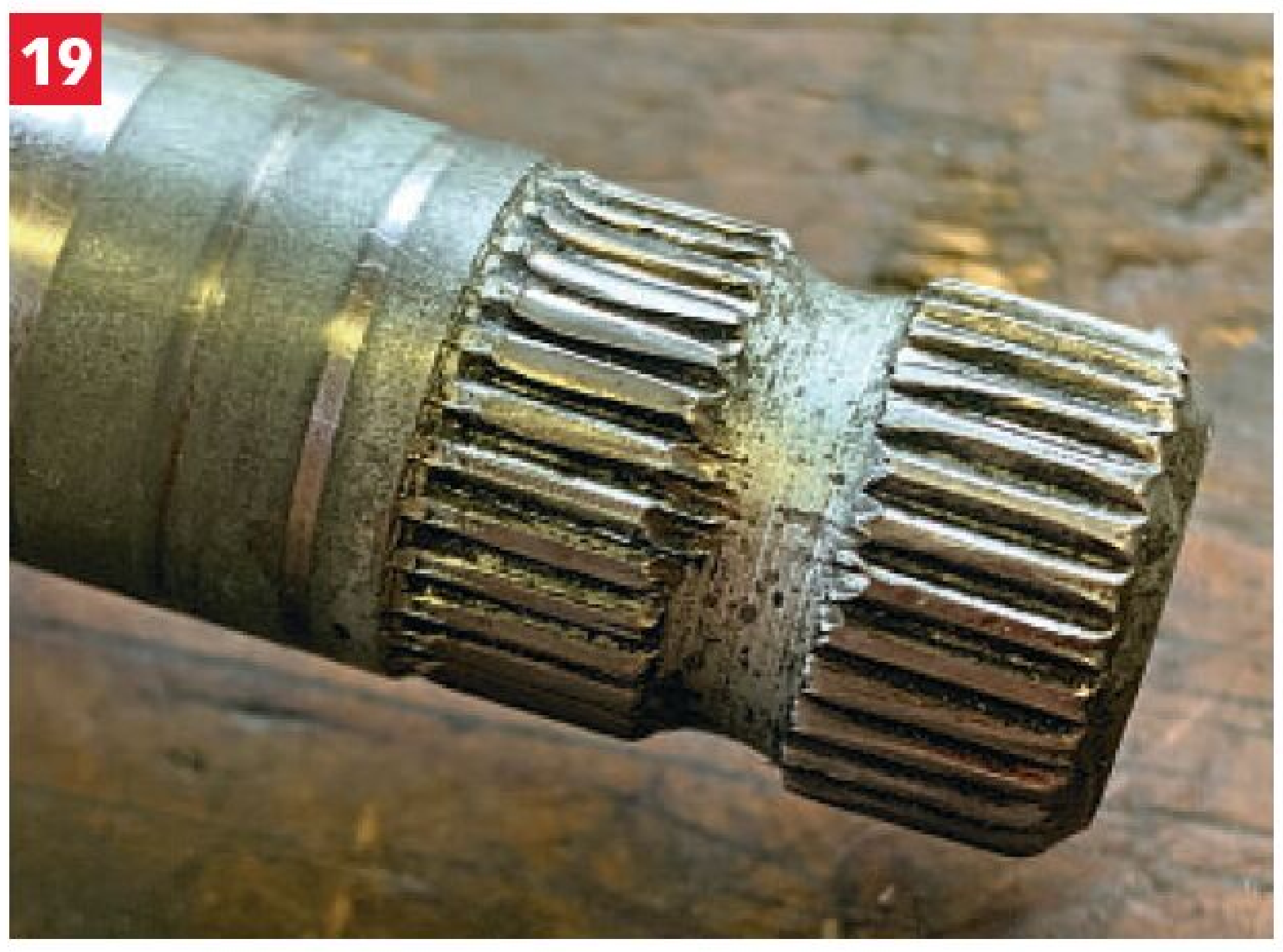

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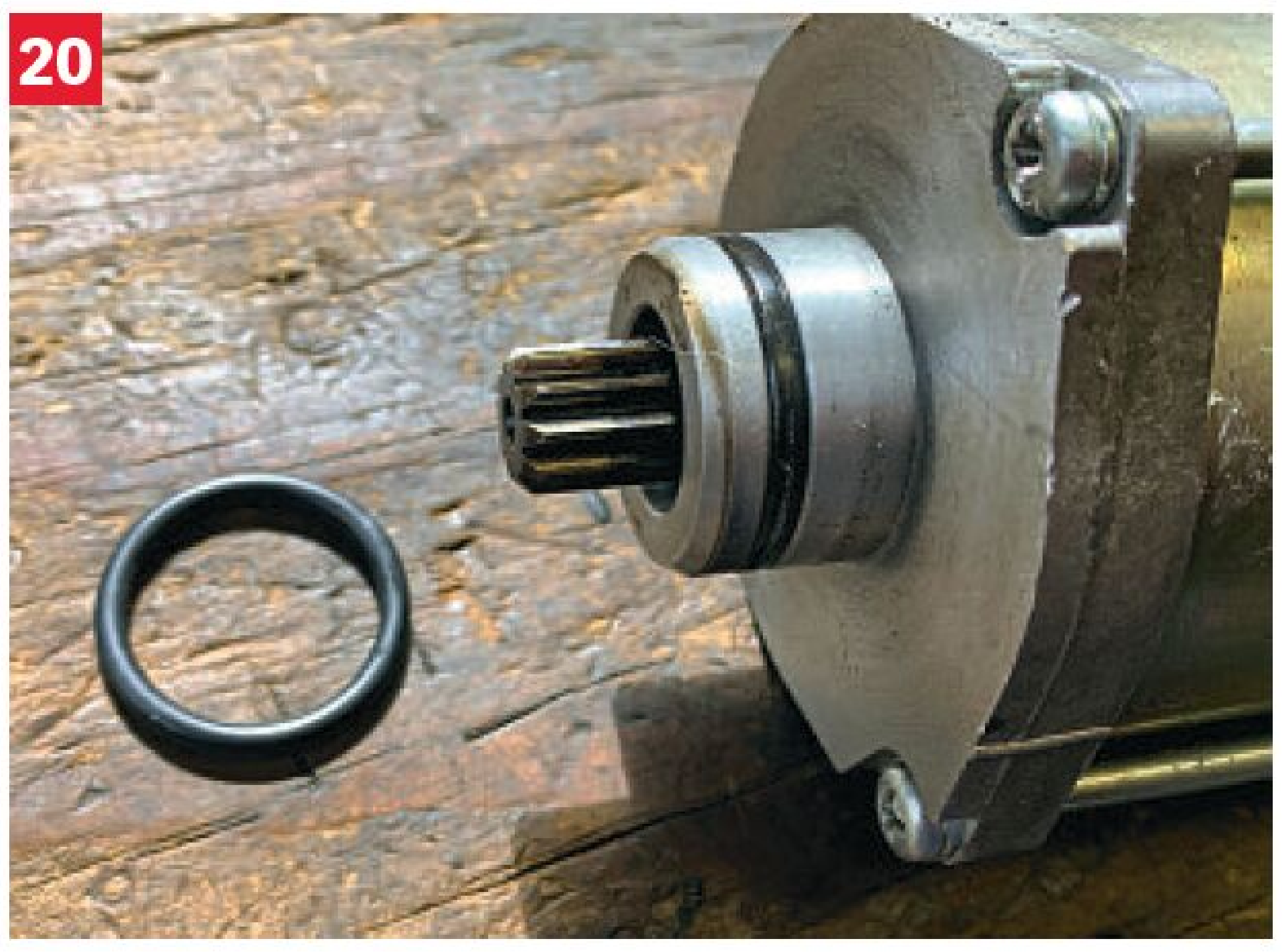

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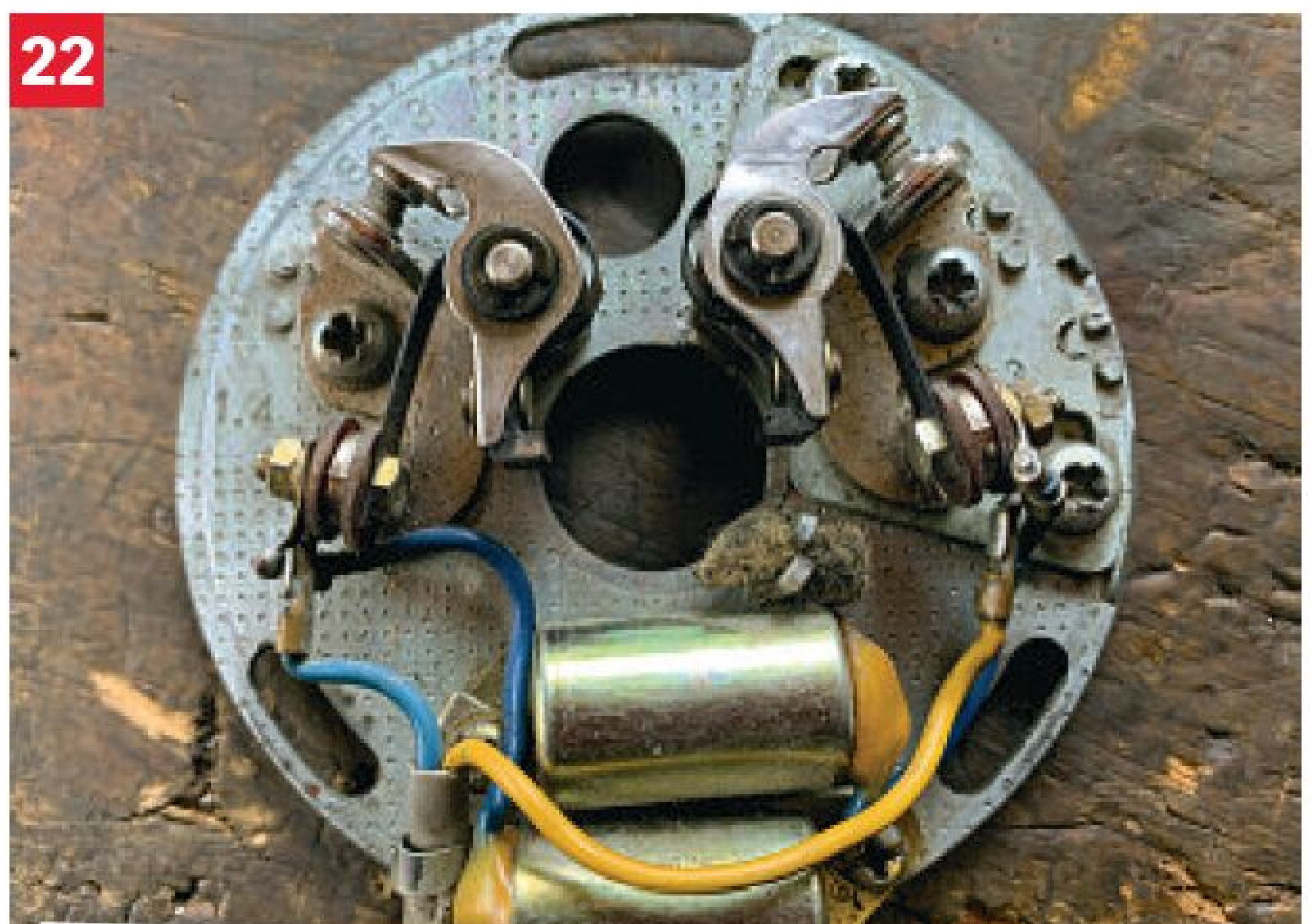

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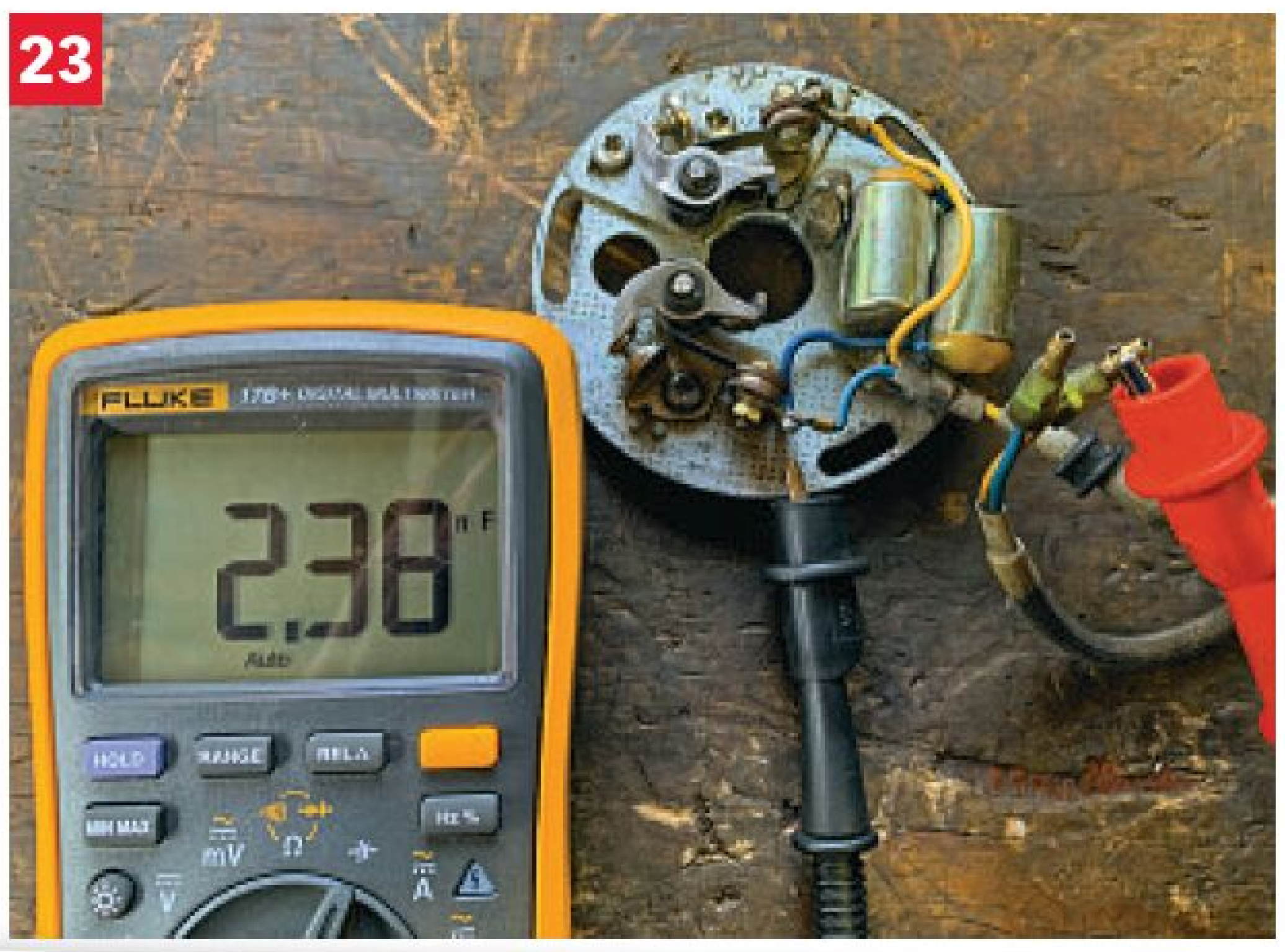

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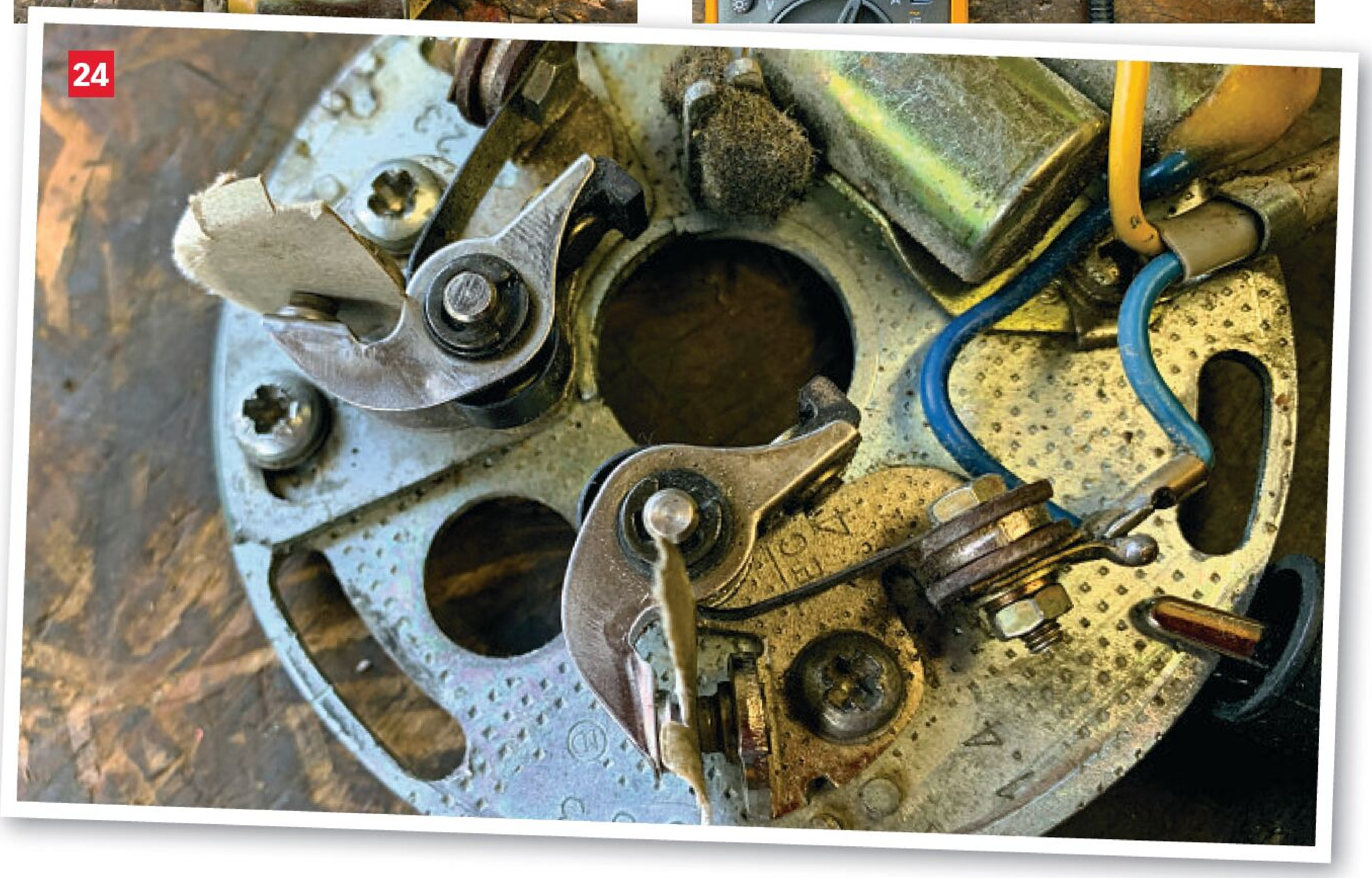

but with common sense you will get there!

Before fitting the cover, you will need to put in the kick-start ratchet assembly **(Photo 17)**. The small spring at the inner end fits into an oval hole and the big spring fits like in **Photo 18** with one end hooked round part of the crankcase. The splines on the shaft were slightly damaged **(Photo 19)** by a previous owner failing to tighten the lever fitting properly, but why use it anyway when there is an electric start?

Talking of which, the starter motor is very simply mounted in the engine with two bolts, but there is an O-ring to seal against oil leaks **(Photo 20)**. Mine was flattened but easy enough to replace by a 213 if you have a set **(Photo 21)**.

Now we are pretty much done with the engine mechanicals apart from the oil-pump, which I shall cover later on. So, moving smoothly on to the boundary between engine mechanicals and electricals, I can now think about the contact breakers. I am sure that many will just chuck the lot away and fit a modern electronic set up instead, but I want to use as many original parts as possible. This is supposed to be a restoration rather than a set of replacements, after all.

Looking at the assembly **(Photo 22)** I can see straightaway that it is identical to that on the CB750. Or is it, because there is a 333 (model code for CB400F) stamped on it. It all looks good, but why not double-check?

Starting with the capacitors, a decent multimeter will have a capacity measurement capability and here **(Photo 23)** I am getting around 2.4 nanofarads which is not enough (a nanofarad is a thousandth of a microfarad).

Then something occurs to me: Both the points sets are being earthed, and what I need to do is insulate them. A couple of bits of cardboard do the trick **(Photo 24)** and now we get a reading of 272 nanofarads = 0.27 microfarads. The other capacitor is similar. The specification is 0.22 ± 10 per cent so the maximum allowed is 0.242. so… how about I see how it works before replacing anything, especially considering that I have a spare CB750 assembly which is also out of spec but still works perfectly well?

Now I just need to set the ignition timing statically (I have covered this many times in the past) and that will be enough to get the engine running before doing it dynamically with a strobe light.

Next time, more electrickery! **cmm**

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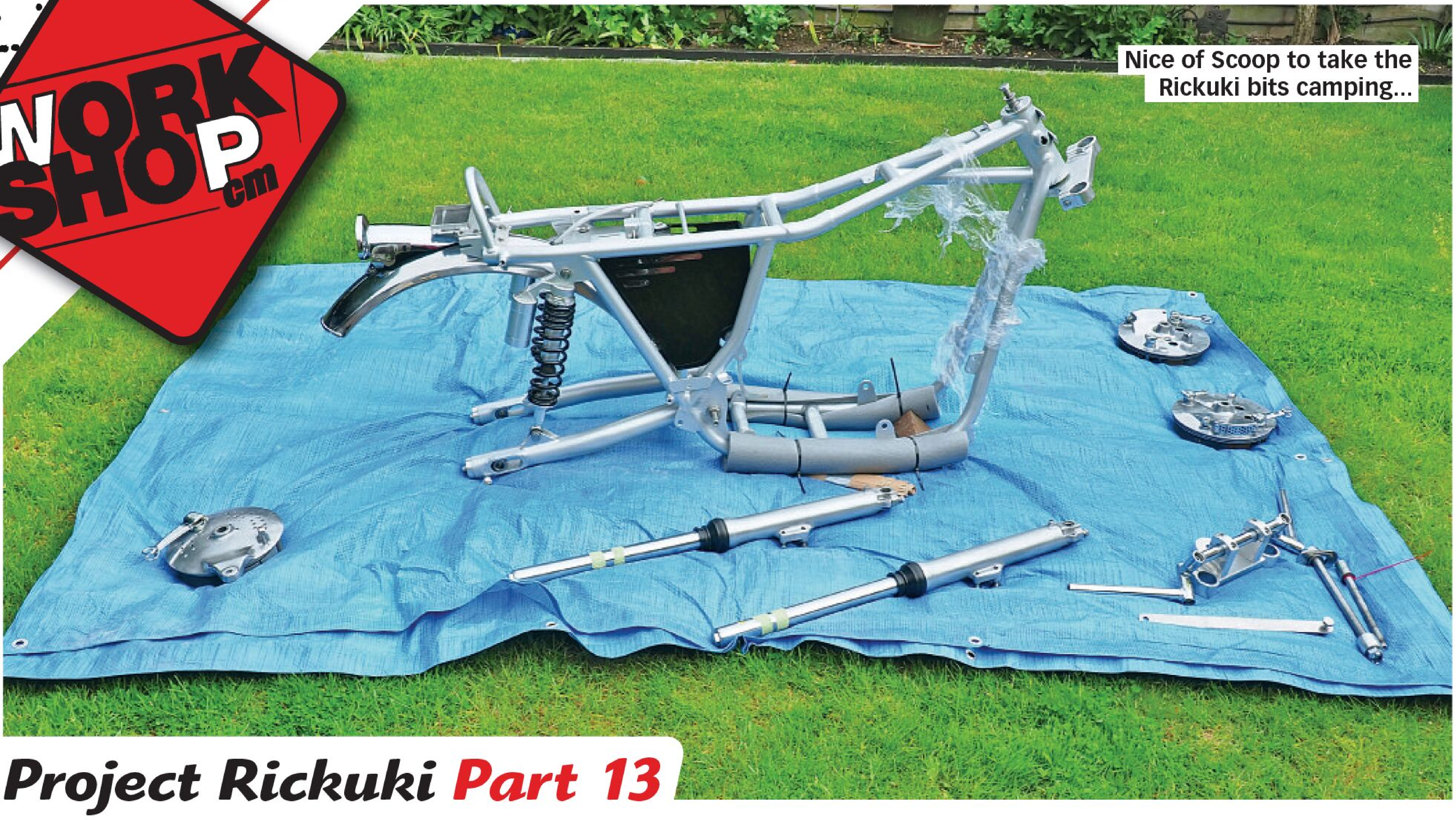


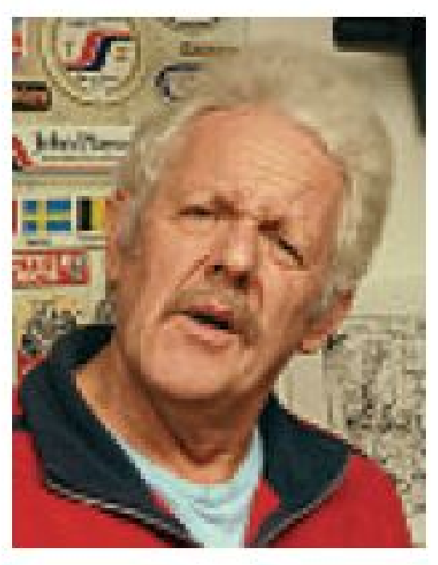
Nice of Scoop to take the Rickuki bits camping…

WORDS AND PICS: **STEVE COOPER**

Project Rickuki Part 13

Bits and pieces

It's up on its wheels again and looking rather tidy, reckons our Scoop!

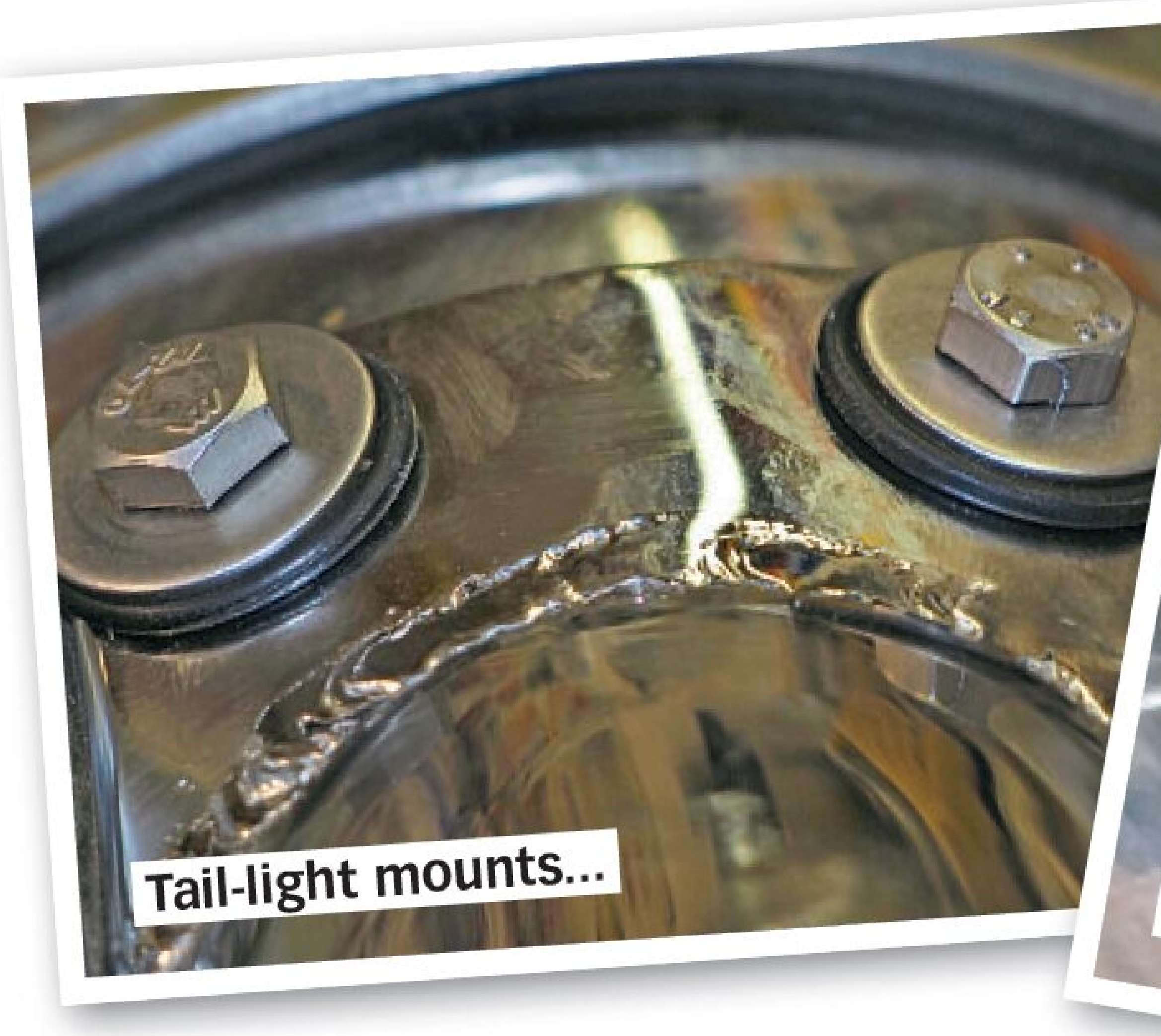


Who doesn't like a decent slice of progress on a project? It's often just the boost we're in need of when it's been a long slog, things have been going wrong, or you're just hacked off with life in general.

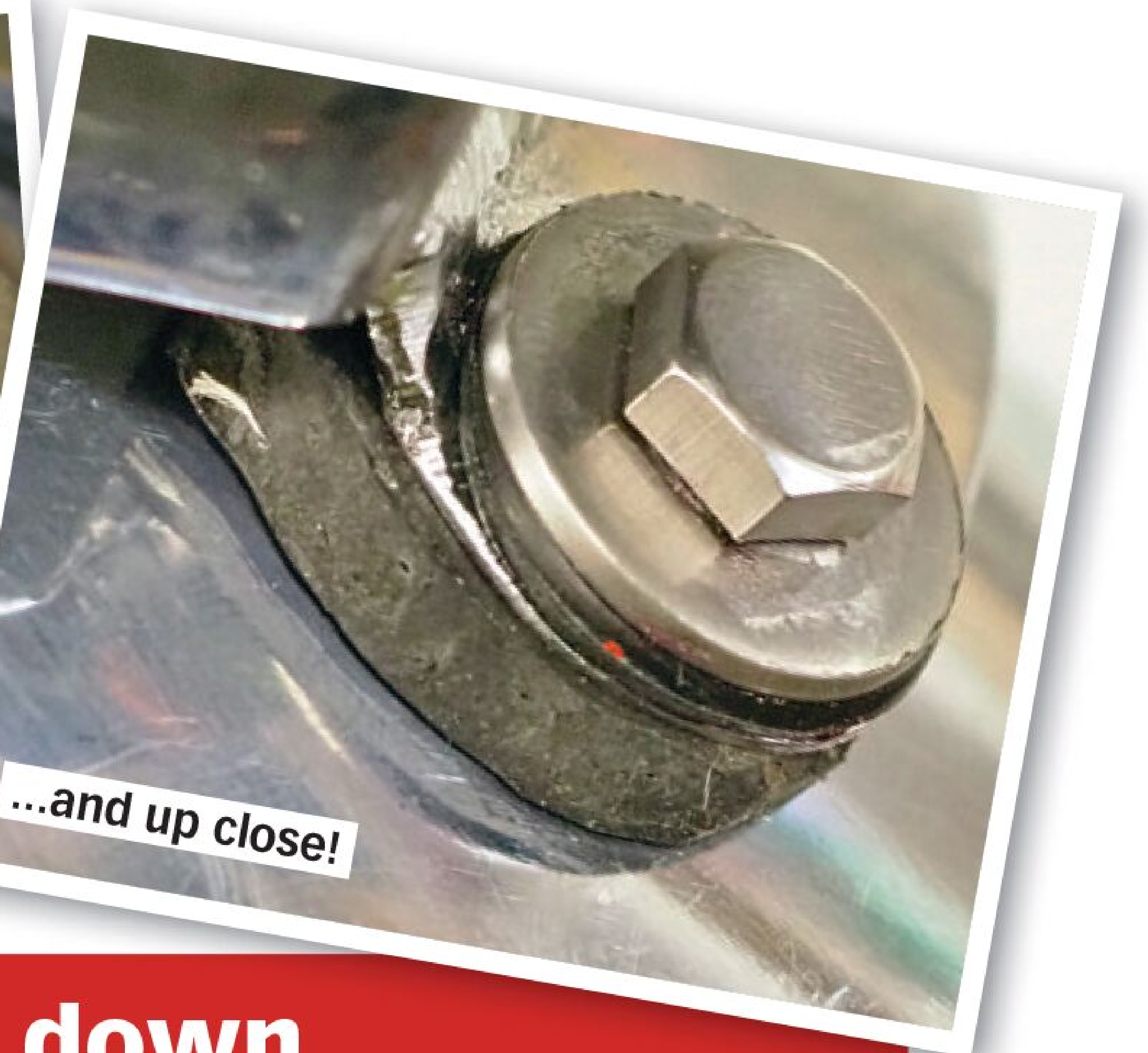
A perfect case in point is the rear-light assembly of the Rickuki. In theory it's not 'mission critical' at this juncture yet; thinking ahead here for once, I'd sussed out that it needs to be in place ASAP so I can fit the battery tray. The unit is a cut-down Suzuki T305 rewelded to suit the stainless-steel rear guard. In an ideal world I'd be using OEM Suzuki rubbers and fittings but as the project is absorbing funds faster than a journalist mopping up booze at a free bar, so some fiscal discretion is the order of the day.

I found some thick rubber sheet hiding in a corner of the workshop which looked viable. A session with a craft knife – no fingers were lost in the process – had two viable pads cut to size. Cutting circles out with a punch produced buffers to fit through the mounts, which were then topped off with some C-form stainless steel washers and bolts. Super-gluing the buffers and then adding some strategic O-rings finished the job – well, almost.

Standing back from the assembled unit



Tail-light mounts…



…and up close!

Keeping the costs down

As anyone who has ventured into the world of specials will tell you, they have the potential to be even more of a money pit than your regular, run-of-the-mill, restoration.

There's something of an 'I'll-just-add-that-and-this-oh-and-those' feeling which can easily see costs spiralling out of control. For that very reason I ended up polishing the brake plates at home and if they were not eye-popping they were at least tidy enough for now and I could always revisit these areas later. Thankfully, the chroming bill is negligible on this project, which makes a change.

As I've worked my way through the chassis rebuild, I've opted for stainless-steel fasteners rather than chroming any steel ones; again it's a cost-effective option if you have a drill and polishing mops.

Buying stainless fixings in bulk has saved me time and money and, to my way of thinking at least, seems to suit the nature of the project.

the lightbulb of logic suddenly flashed on… I'd be needing power to the unit, wouldn't I? Sometime later, but the same weekend, I'd drilled the rear guard to fit the rubber grommets I fortuitously had in stock that were the right size and then, just like that, the unit was tailored and fit for purpose. On production bikes you always have neat channels or tidy metal clips to hold cables under guards, but not on a project like this. Therefore, a pair of industrial stick-on cable clamps were pressed (sic) into place and (if I say so myself) the end result looks the business.

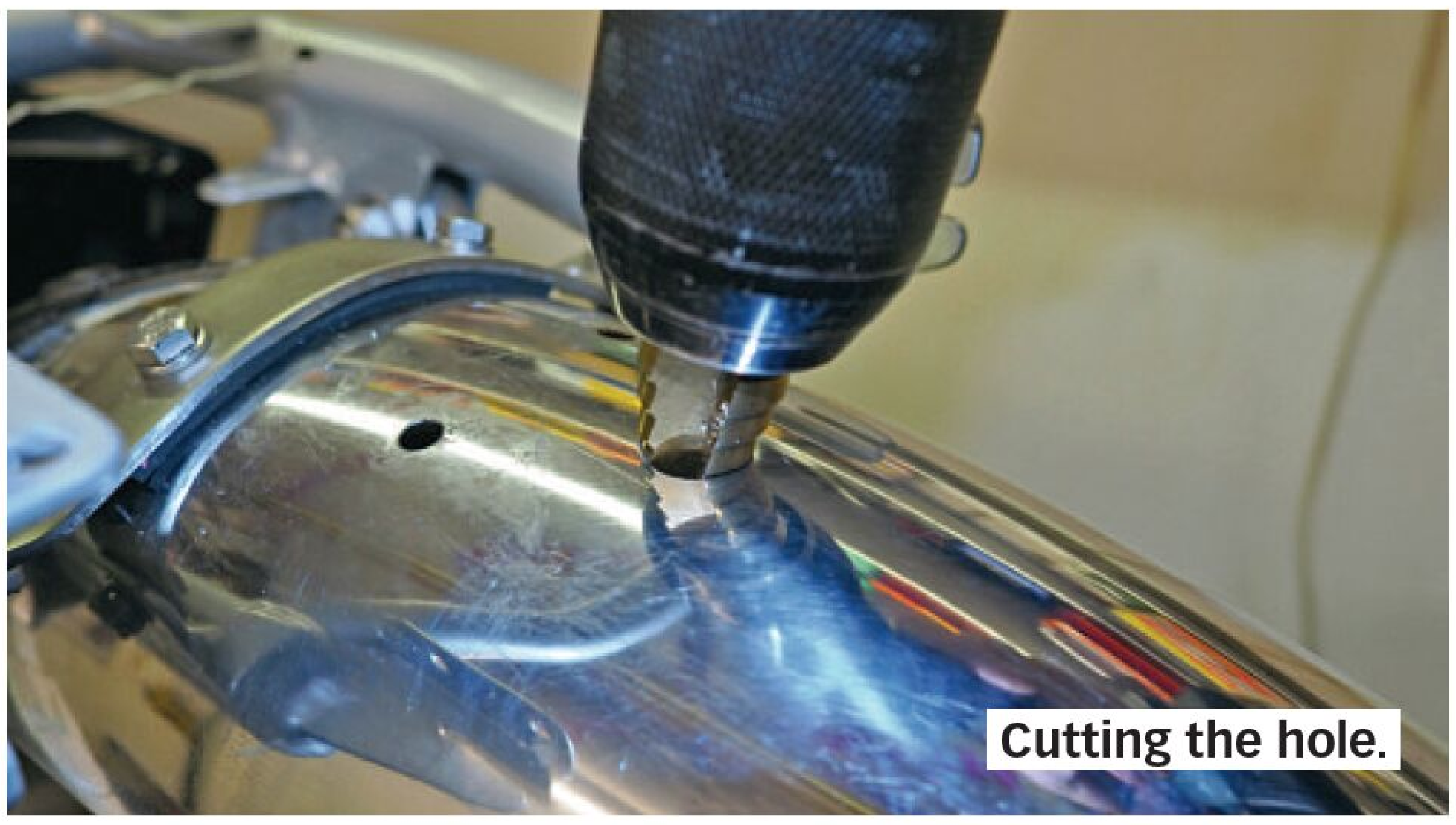
Back on course again, the old square-headed bolts in the rear hub were looking a little tired and jaded so they were replaced by new ones from Wemoto. At the same time the original open bearing was replaced with a new double shielded one from the same source. As always, the team at Wemoto keep many of our CMM projects on track – thanks guys. And, obviously, from the same source a set of Schuring cush-drive rubbers ousted the OEM Suzuki ones which, at a guess, were around 45 years old.

Yes, the project could have carried on with the old moulded parts but they were noticeably harder and had just started to granulate, which clearly indicates they were past their sell-by date in my opinion. The last task before commencing the rebuild was to fit all the brake plates with new shoes, and in this particular case that would be three sets as the front hub is GT750 which features the one-year-only four leading shoe brake. That quartet of shoes and their springs had been purchased ages ago and 'safely stored' which, of course, meant they'd subsequently magically disappeared. And in the time-honoured manner they did, of course, bloody well reappear within days of the replacement quartet rocking up. Can anyone explain why this happens so often please?

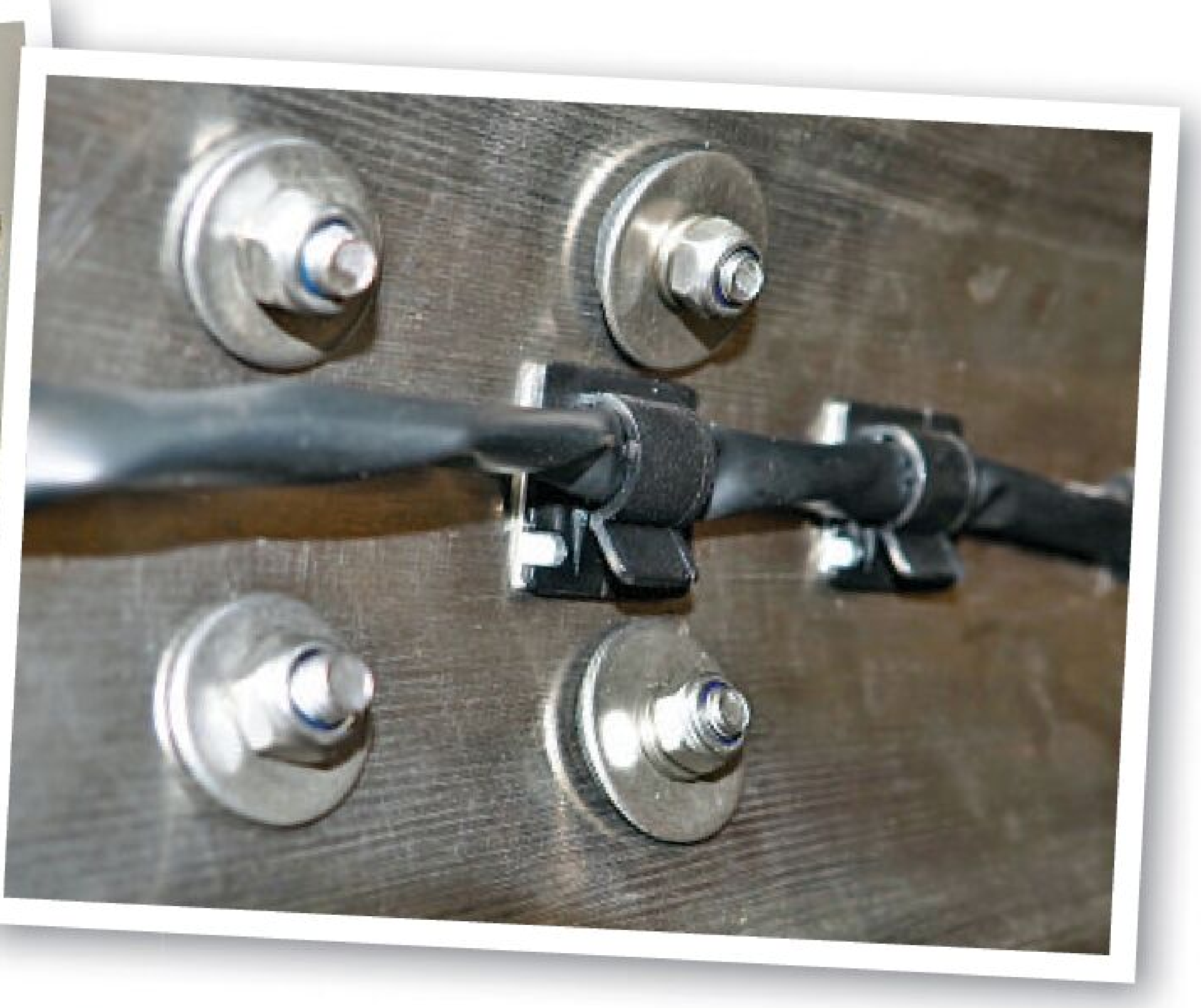
With the chassis outside on a tarpaulin and plenty of space to work, the first task of the rebuild was to fit the rear wheel in-between the freshly powder-coated swingarm. I'm always apprehensive when I get to this part of a project because, being both ham-fisted and absent-minded, I know there's a better than evens chance I'll mark something.

Other than the reduced tolerances due to the coating process, it all went together better than I'd hoped. In case you were wondering about the cable ties, they

inch/mm
14.51
OFF
ON
ZERO
One grommet: selected!


Cutting the hole.

At last! One bracket fitted on the mudguard.


The cable run under the guard/guard architecture. Nice job.

Sprocket bolts ready to go in… you'll notice which ones are 'new'!

Proof that Steve hasn't lost them: new on left!

Cush-drive rubbers replaced.

were used to hold the alloy slider plates in place while I wiggled the axle through. Next, the forks were slid through the lower yokes which then allowed the top yokes and handlebars to be fitted; suitably nipped up on the high tensile cap head bolts, the front-end now bestowed a look of purpose to the Rickuki.

The front hub got another once-over just to be sure and a final wipe with brake cleaner for good measure. It was at this point I spotted the neat way Suzuki retained the ferrous brake band inside the alloy hub. No pressed-in random pins or machined flats here, oh no!

The periphery of the iron surface is machined with axial serrations to which the inner face of the alloy hub is cast/bonded to – that is a quality job! Now on a roll, the final task was to fit the front wheel and twin brake plates, which sounded a lot easier than it actually was. If you've never handled a four leading shoe brake let me tell you – you very swiftly run out of hands.

The assembly isn't light, the brake plates are quite keen on flopping outwards, and then there's the axle to wiggle into place, all whilst keeping everything concentric. All I can say is thank God the brake plates are secured by torque-arms and not fitted with retaining slots that need to be matched up to lugs on the fork legs – I'd still be fighting it all now. Of course, Mrs. C was press-ganged in to assist and with an extra pair of hands everything went together rather splendidly.

So finally, I have a wheelable chassis that actually resembles a motorcycle rather than a pile of refurbished parts. Still to do at this stage is sort out the rear torque-arm which is only there or thereabouts, ditto the rechromed versions at the front which may or may not end up with the OEM retaining devices I don't have. These curious pieces of metal are hooked into the lowest hole of each arm then bent around the tightened nut.

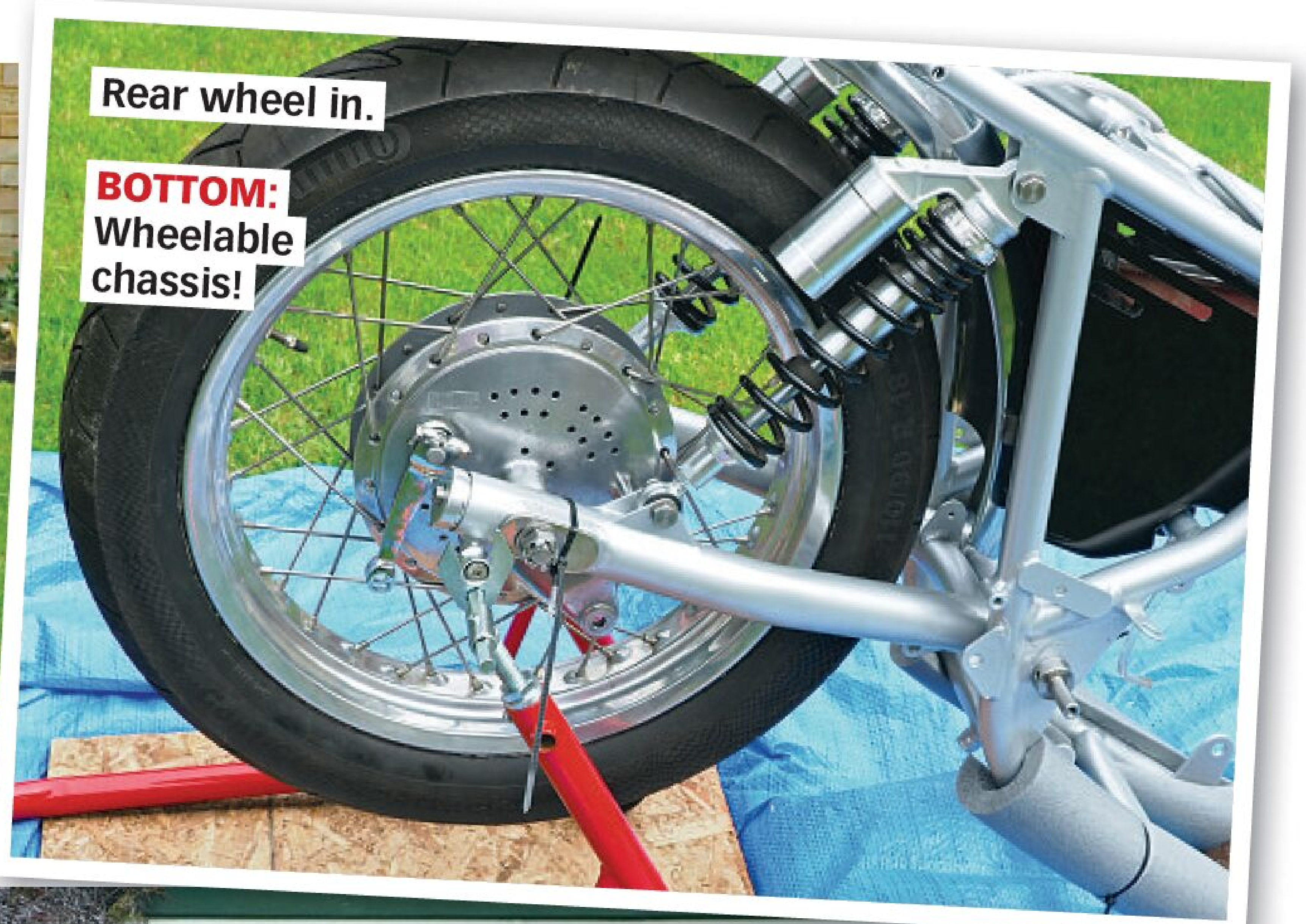
Although they'd look period correct I cannot but help think some 21st century thread lock and/or a Nyloc nut might very well be a more pragmatic choice – we shall see in due course. **cmm**

Thanks this month to:

Wemoto: https://www.wemoto.com

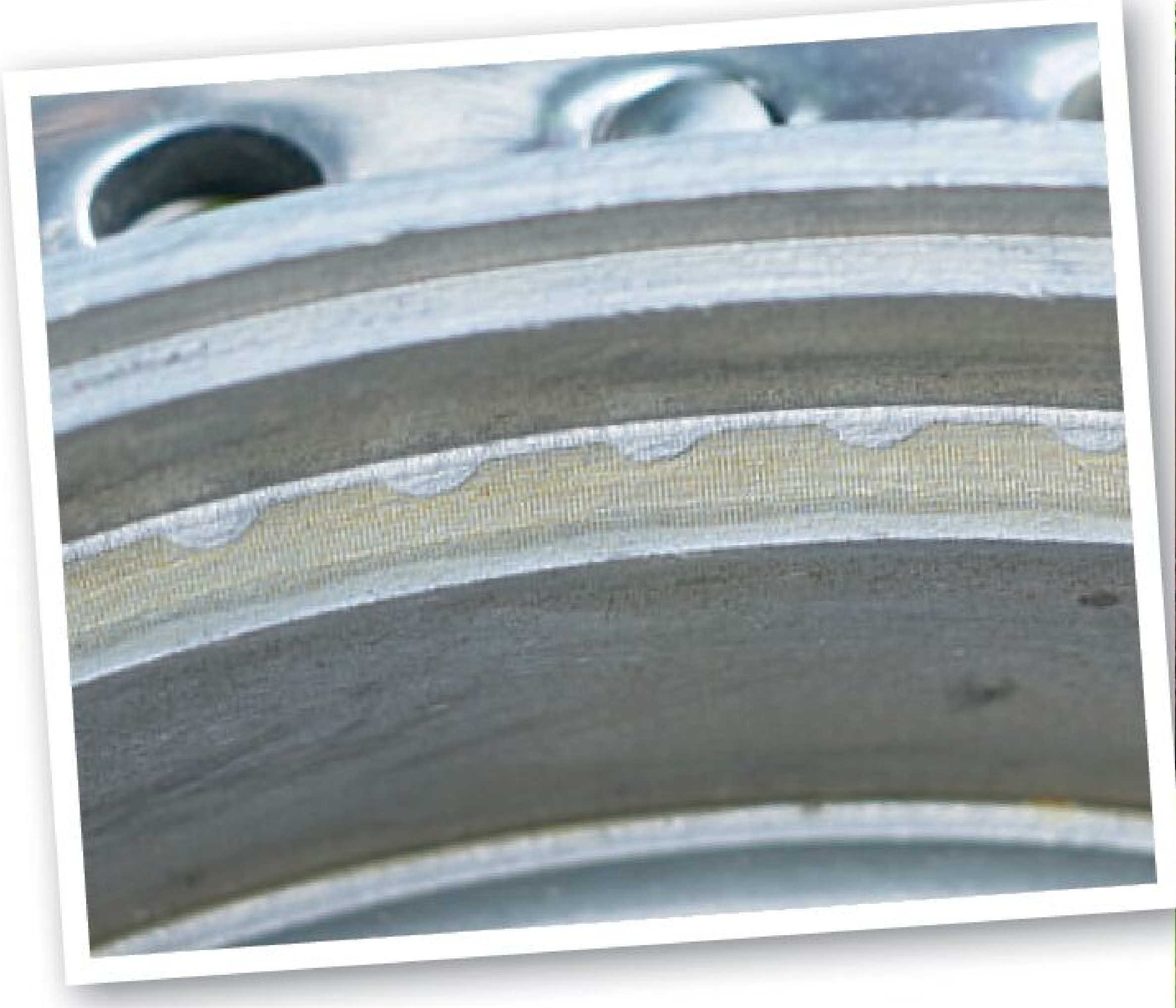
Brake shoes for the Rickuki: we want to be able to stop effectively!

Forks are in: it's starting to look rather lovely...



Rear wheel in.

BOTTOM: Wheelable chassis!



If you look closely you'll see that the brake band has been retained.

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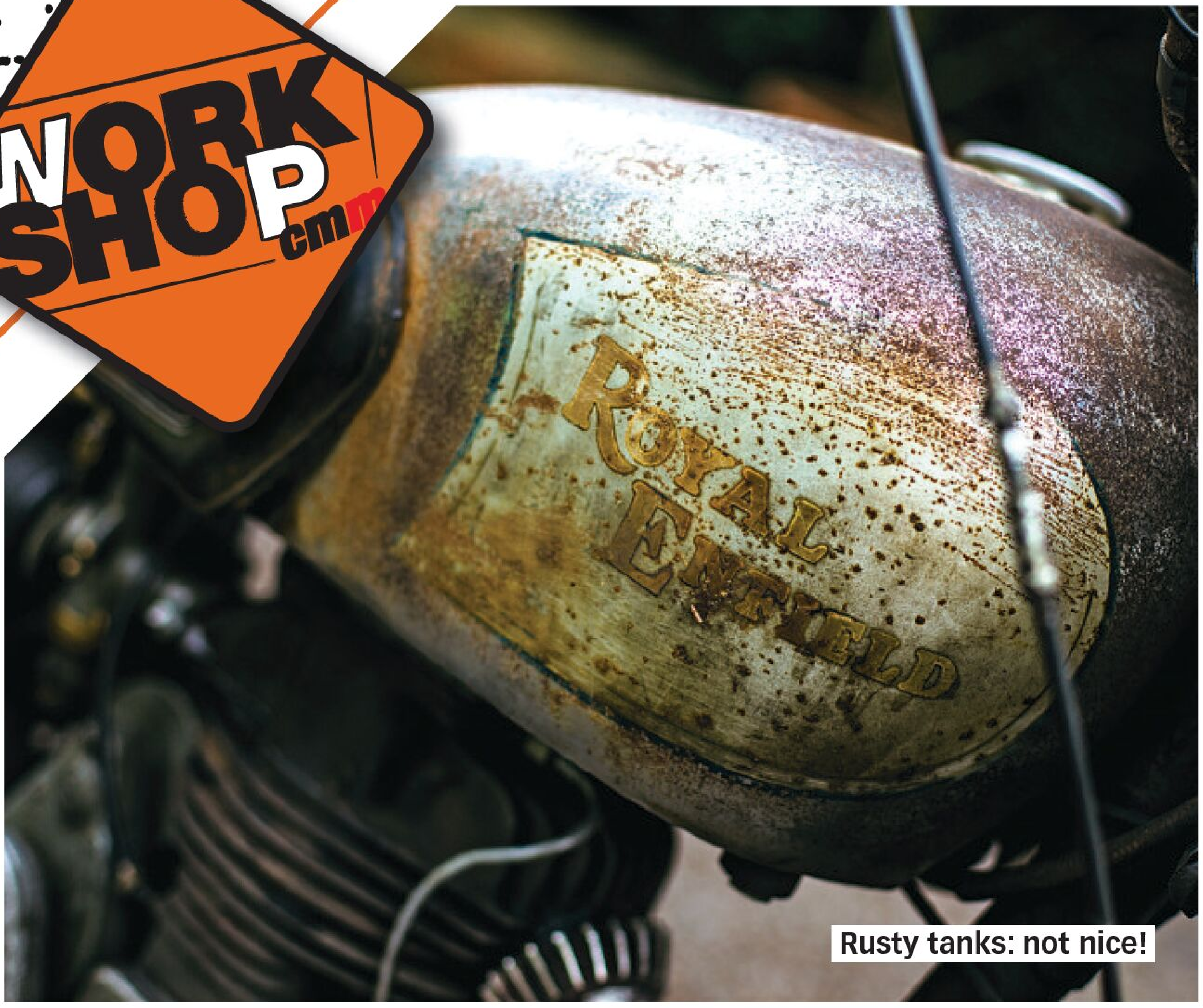

Rusty tanks: not nice!

WORDS: GERAN VAN MANN PICS: SLOSH, MORTONS ARCHIVE

Do the Slosh!

Well, it's nowt to do with a Scottish dance and more to do with sealing your steel or aluminium tank. If you're still game, of course…

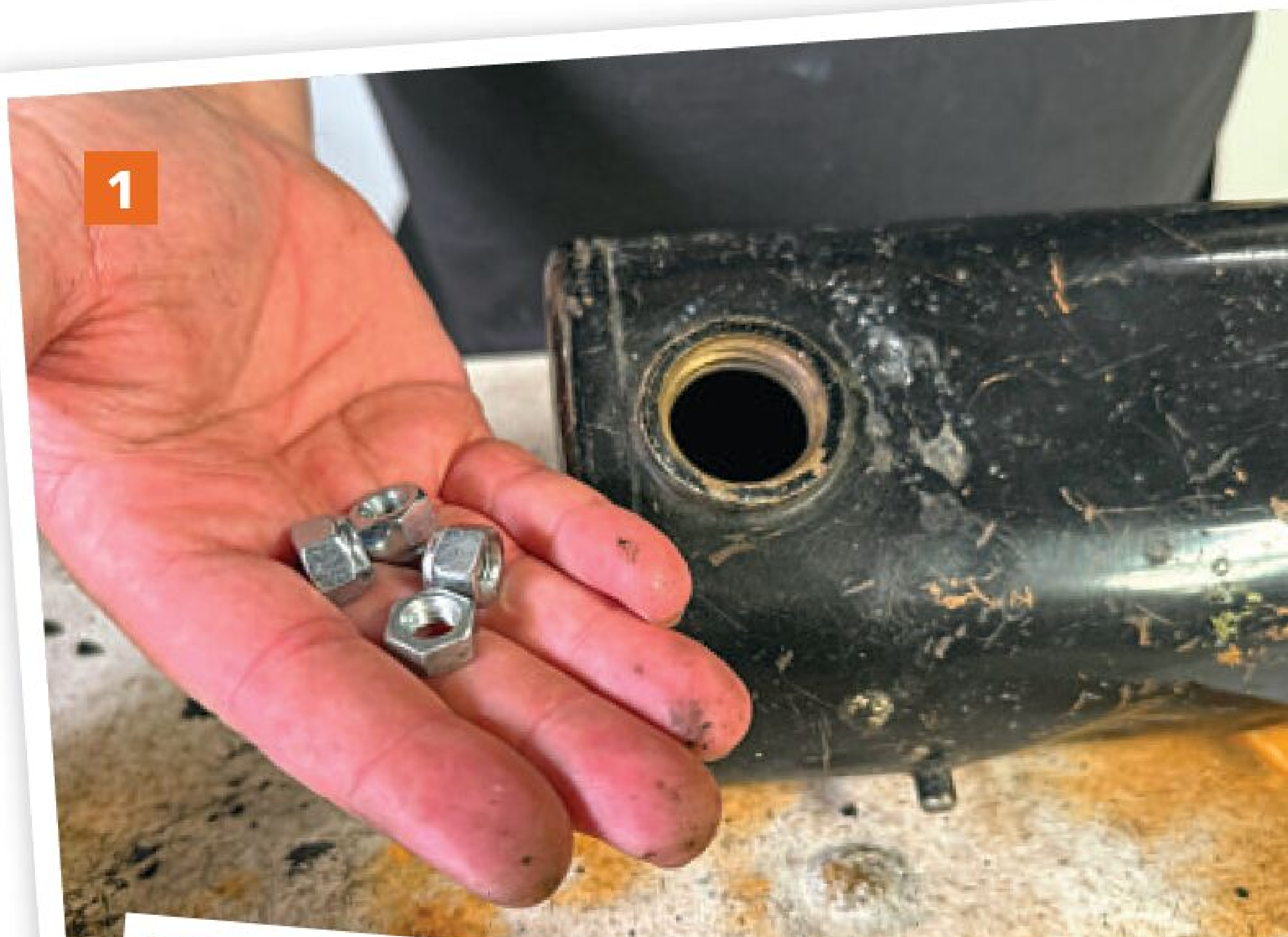
Slosh is designed for the sealing of steel and aluminium petrol and diesel tanks, so let's get going.

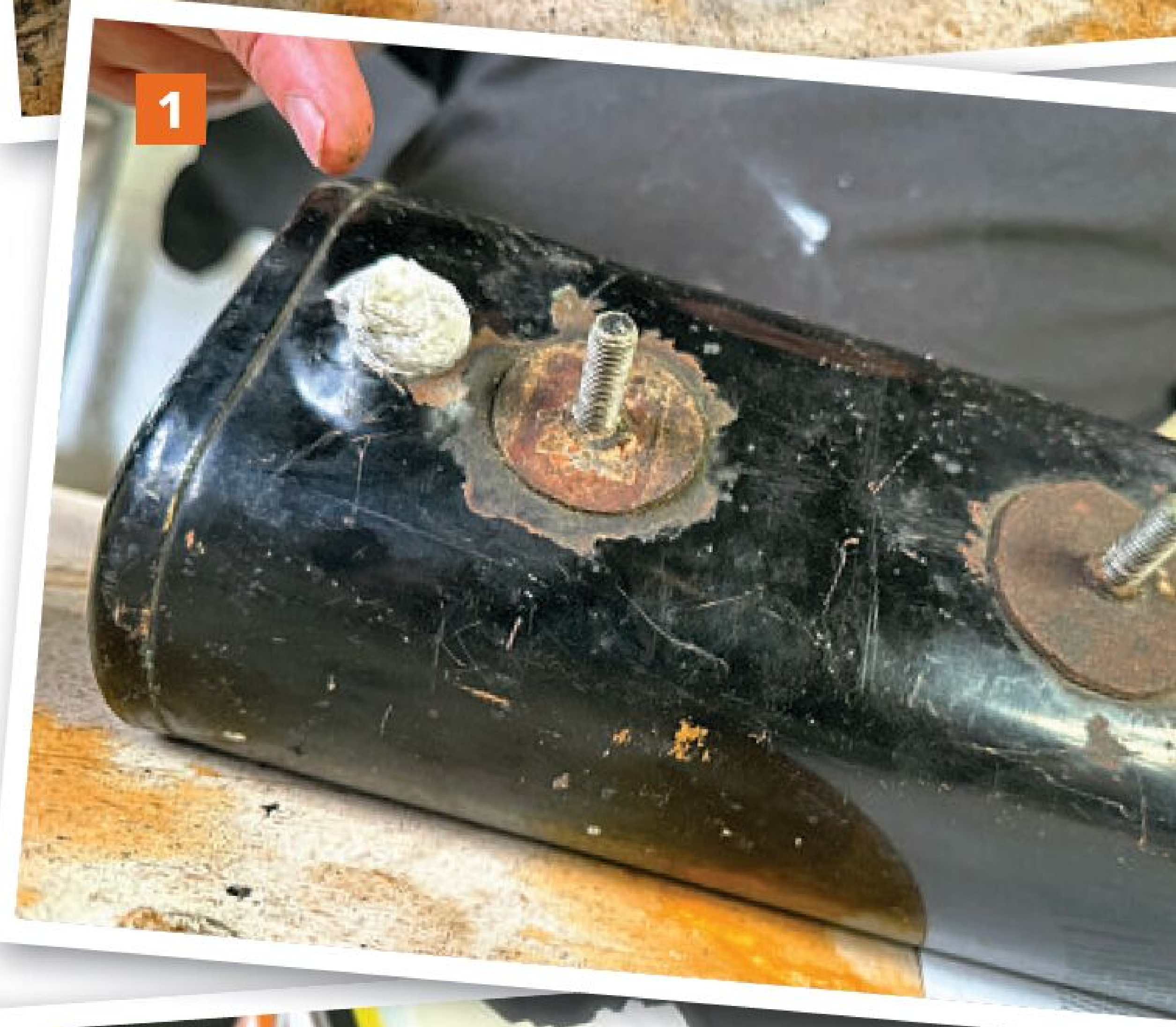
Tests with dilutions of up to 85 per cent corn ethanol show no breakdown of the coating, so it is more than capable of protection against the ethanol content of modern fuel.

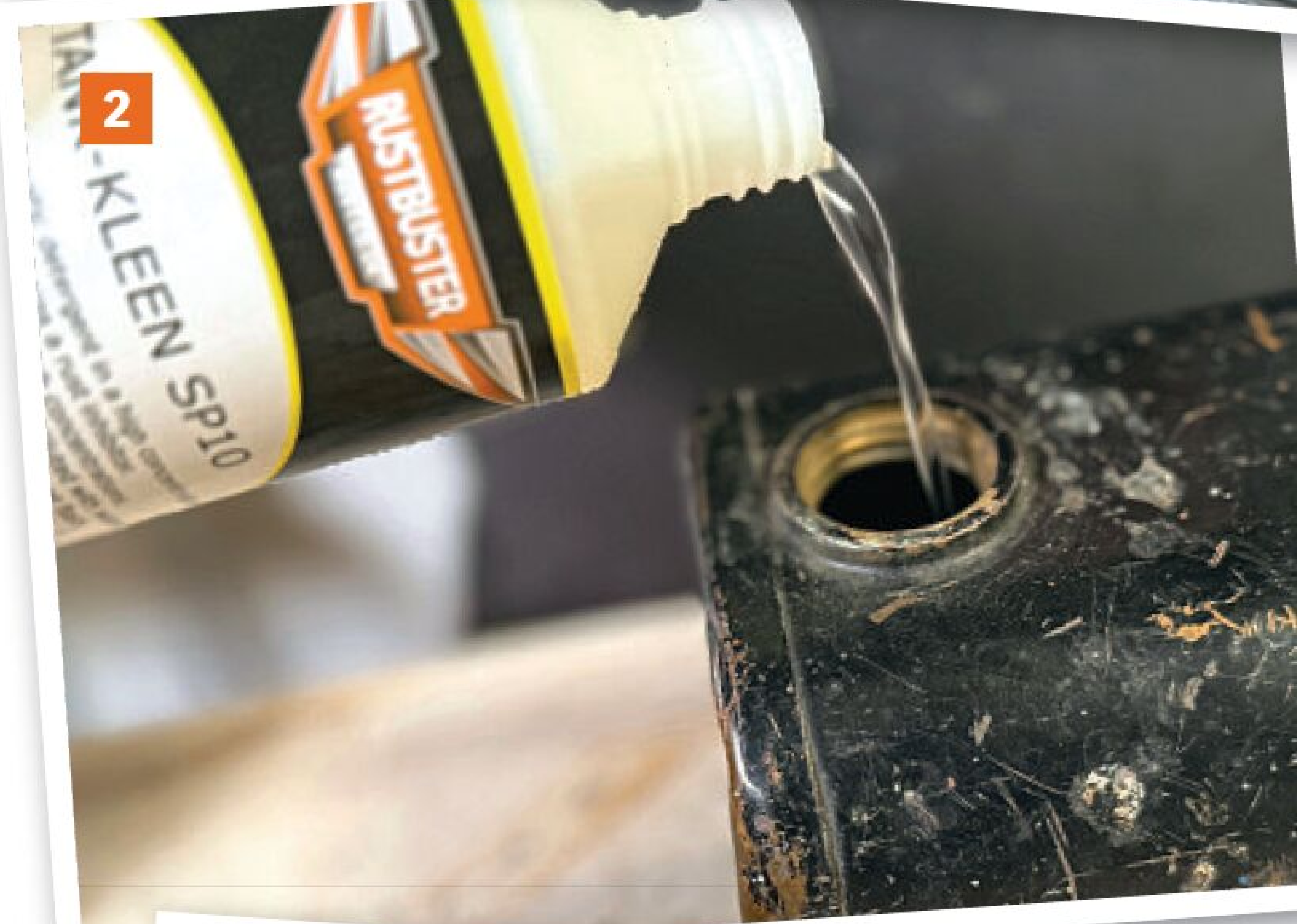
Before you start, this is the important bit! It is vital that you remove or protect anything that you do not want Slosh to seal, including plugs, fuel gauge sender units, breather pipes and filters.

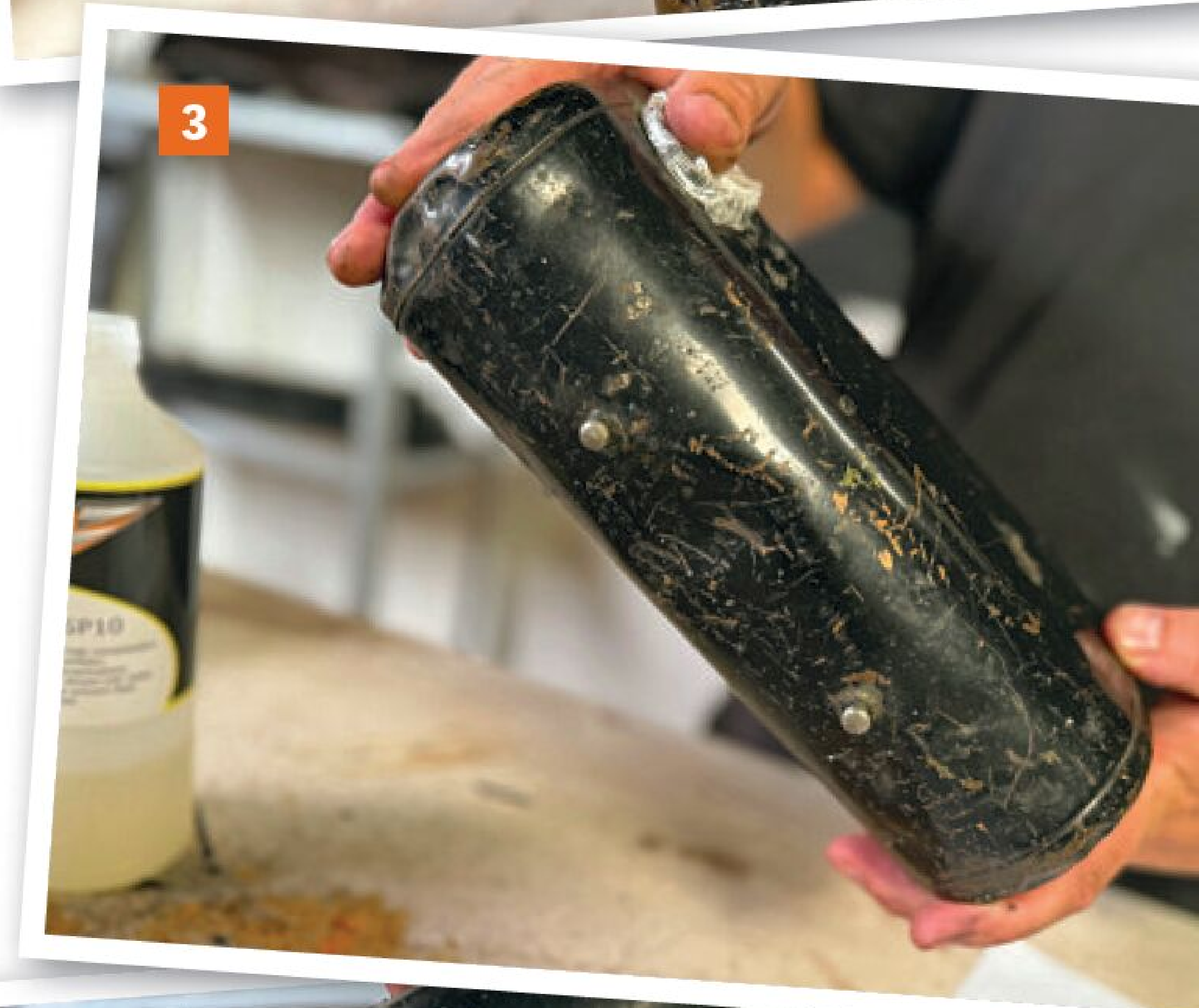
With the tank off the bike (or out of the vehicle, if it's got more than two wheels) check for holes and any sealer that may have been used. Any previously applied sealer will need to be removed with Rustbuster AS-10. Slosh will seal pin holes up to 500um in diameter (about 0.5mm) and seal weeping seams – which is nice. I'd suggest repairing larger holes

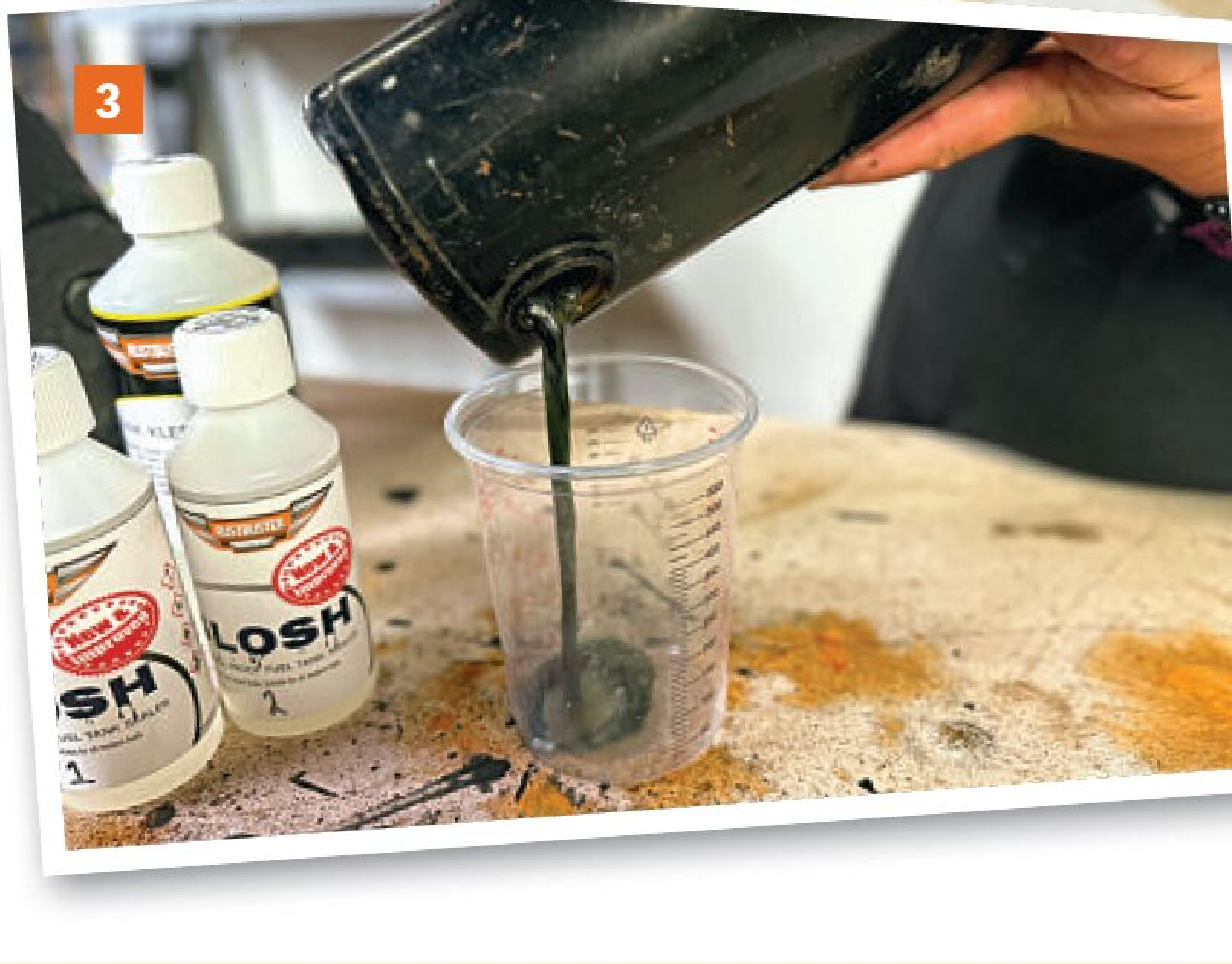
RUSTBUSTER
TANK-KLEEN SP10
SLOSH
1
2











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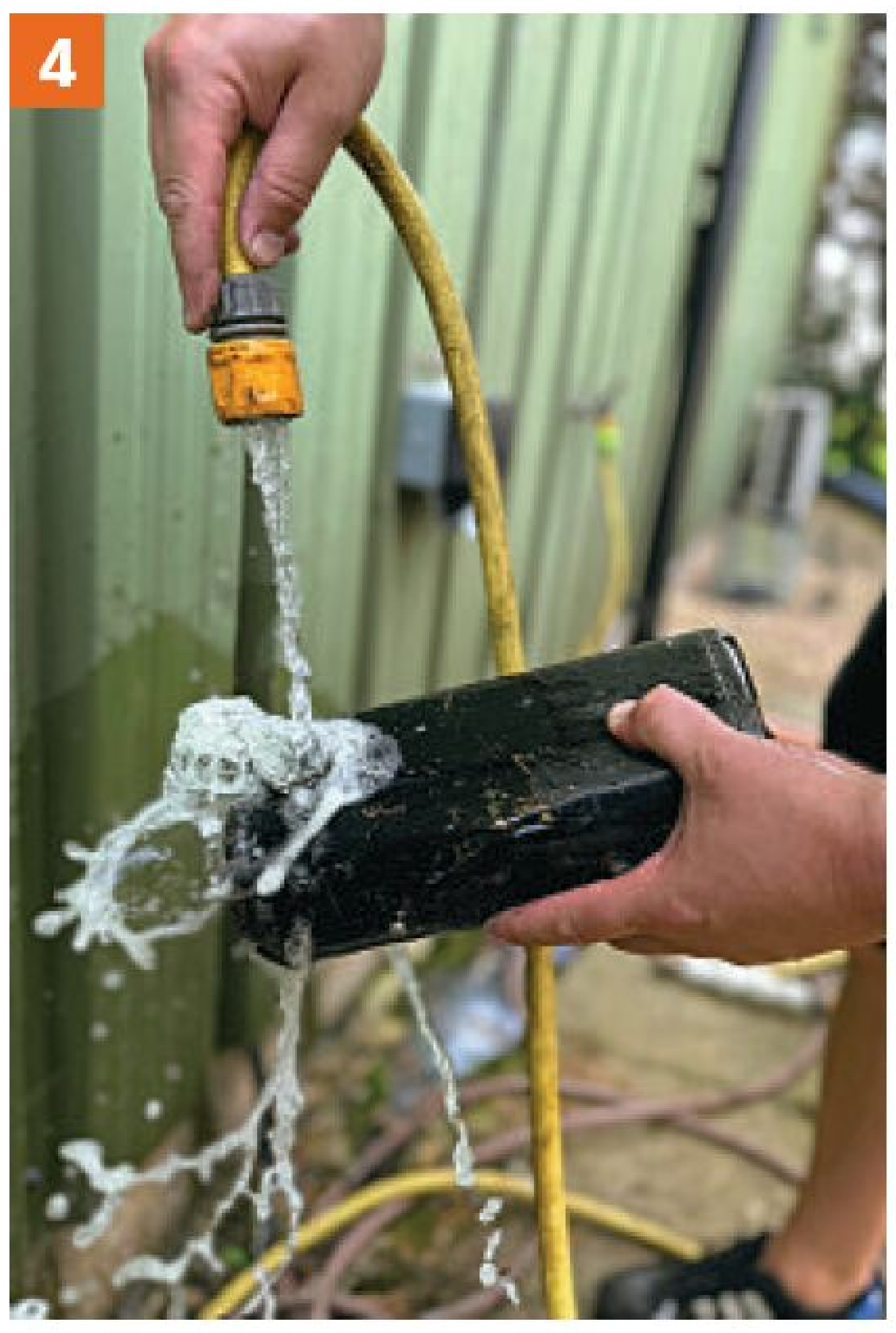

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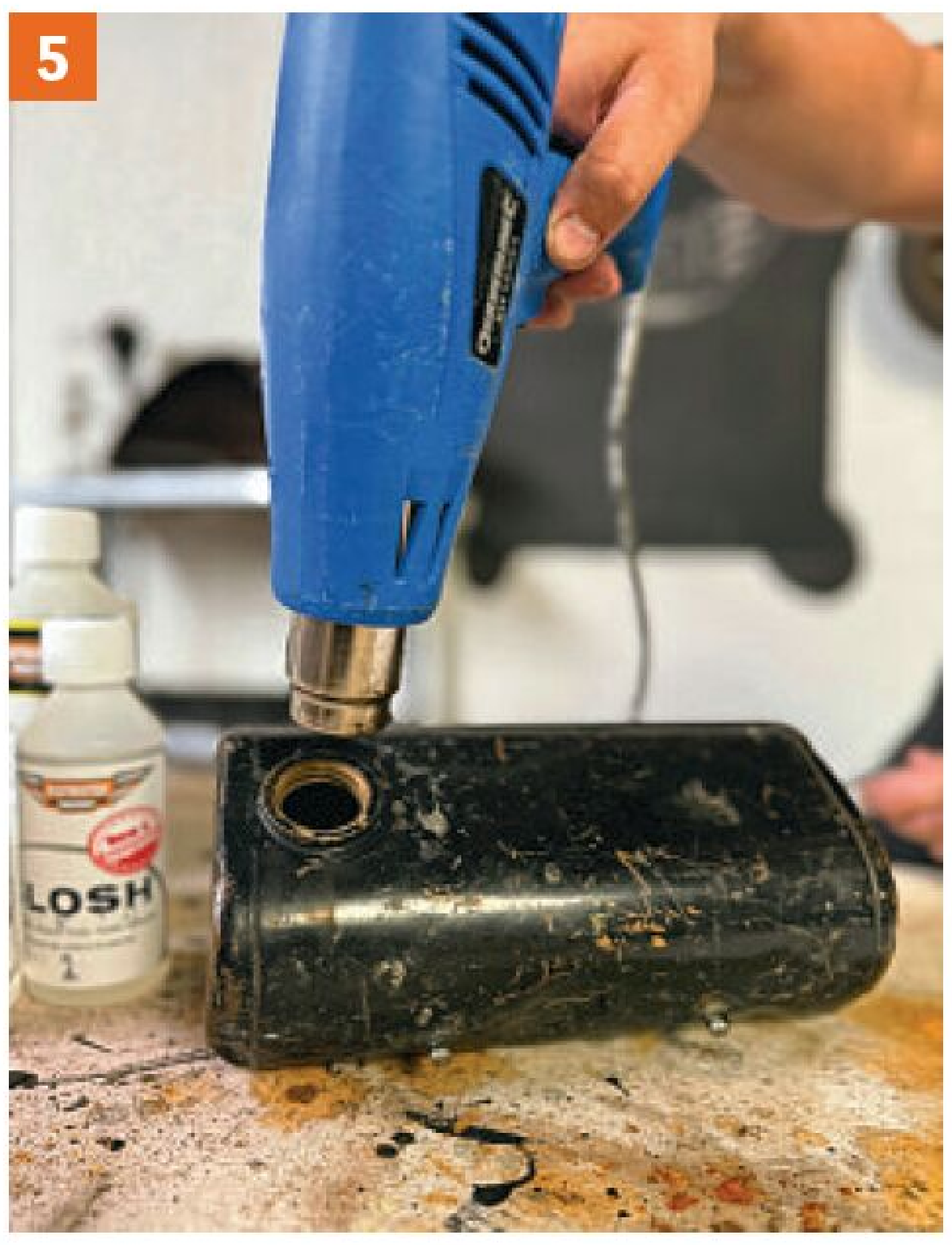

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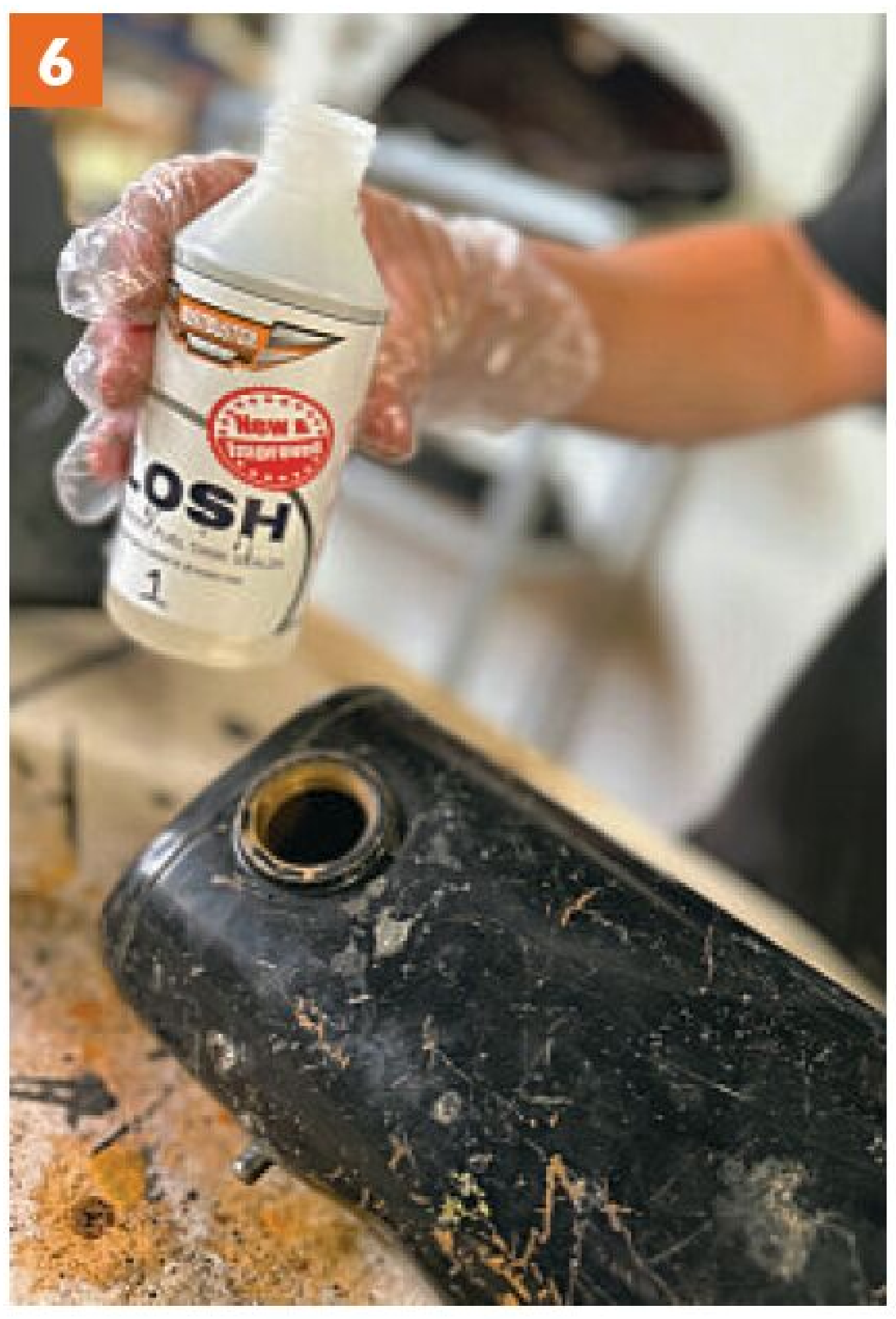


externally by welding or PC-7 Epoxy Repair Paste. Here was our procedure for cleaning and sealing your tank:

1. Insert temporary bungs into drainholes/ sender holes, etc. Then put a few nuts, washers or small sharp stones in the tank.

2. Wearing protective gloves, pour 500ml of Tank Kleen into the tank and seal the fuel filler opening.

3. Shake the tank from side to side to scrub away loose surface contamination. Then empty the Tank Kleen and nuts/ washers or stones. Repeat for as long as it takes to clean the tank. You can reuse Tank Kleen, filtering out dirt removed from the tank each time.

4. Rinse thoroughly with fresh water until all deposits and traces of Tank-Kleen are removed. Use a power wash (but not a high-pressure wash) or shake the tank.

5. Leave the tank to dry. The tank must be bone-dry before using Slosh, so, if possible, use a compressor to pass air through the tank. You can force this but simply leaving it to dry is the best solution.

6. Time to seal the tank. With the tank clean and bone-dry, here is the procedure for sealing the tank: Wearing protective gloves, pour all the Slosh marked 'bottle 1' into the tank.

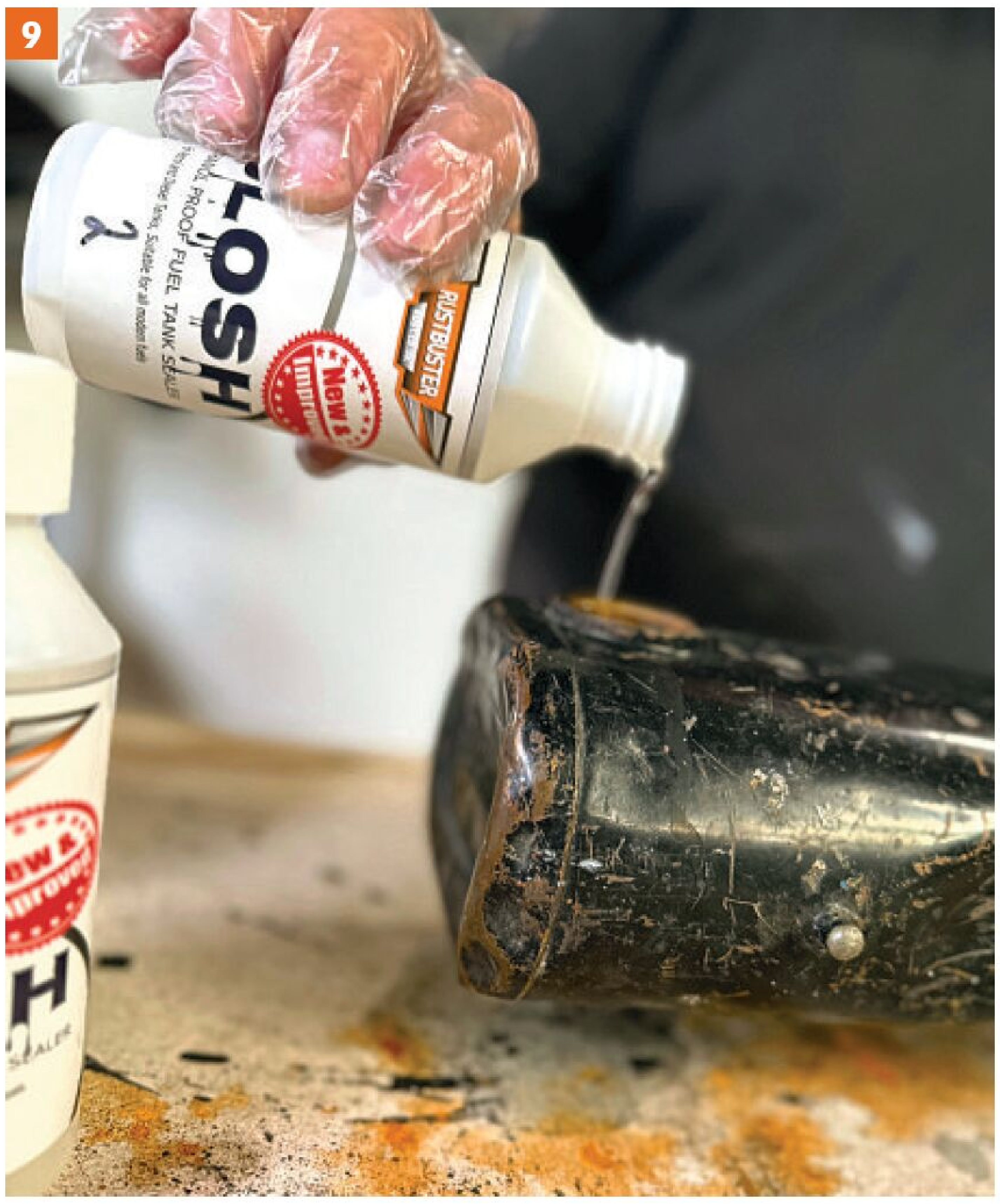
7. Move the tank from side to side and upside-down to fully coat the interior of the tank. When you have coated the tank, put it down for 20 minutes and then repeat this process two more times.

8. Drain the excess sealer via the drainplug hole back into the empty tin. (Do not drain Slosh from the fuel filler opening as this often has an extended edge inside the tank which will prevent the sealer from draining completely.) Draining excess sealer is necessary as if deposits pool in one area this may set off a bubbling reaction while curing. The waste sealer will fully cure in the tin and can be disposed of as dry waste.

9. After two hours have passed and the first coats is still tacky, pour all the Slosh marked 'bottle 2' into the tank.

10. Move the tank from side to side and upside-down to fully coat the interior of the tank. When you have coated the tank, put it down for 20 minutes and then repeat this process twice more. Drain the excess sealer via the drainplug hole back into the empty tin. (Again, do not drain Slosh from the fuel filler opening as this often has an extended edge inside the tank which will prevent the sealer from draining completely.) Draining excess sealer is necessary because if deposits pool in one area this may set off a bubbling reaction while curing.

11. The tank can be used after 24 hours, although Slosh states a period of five days is recommended. *cmm*

9


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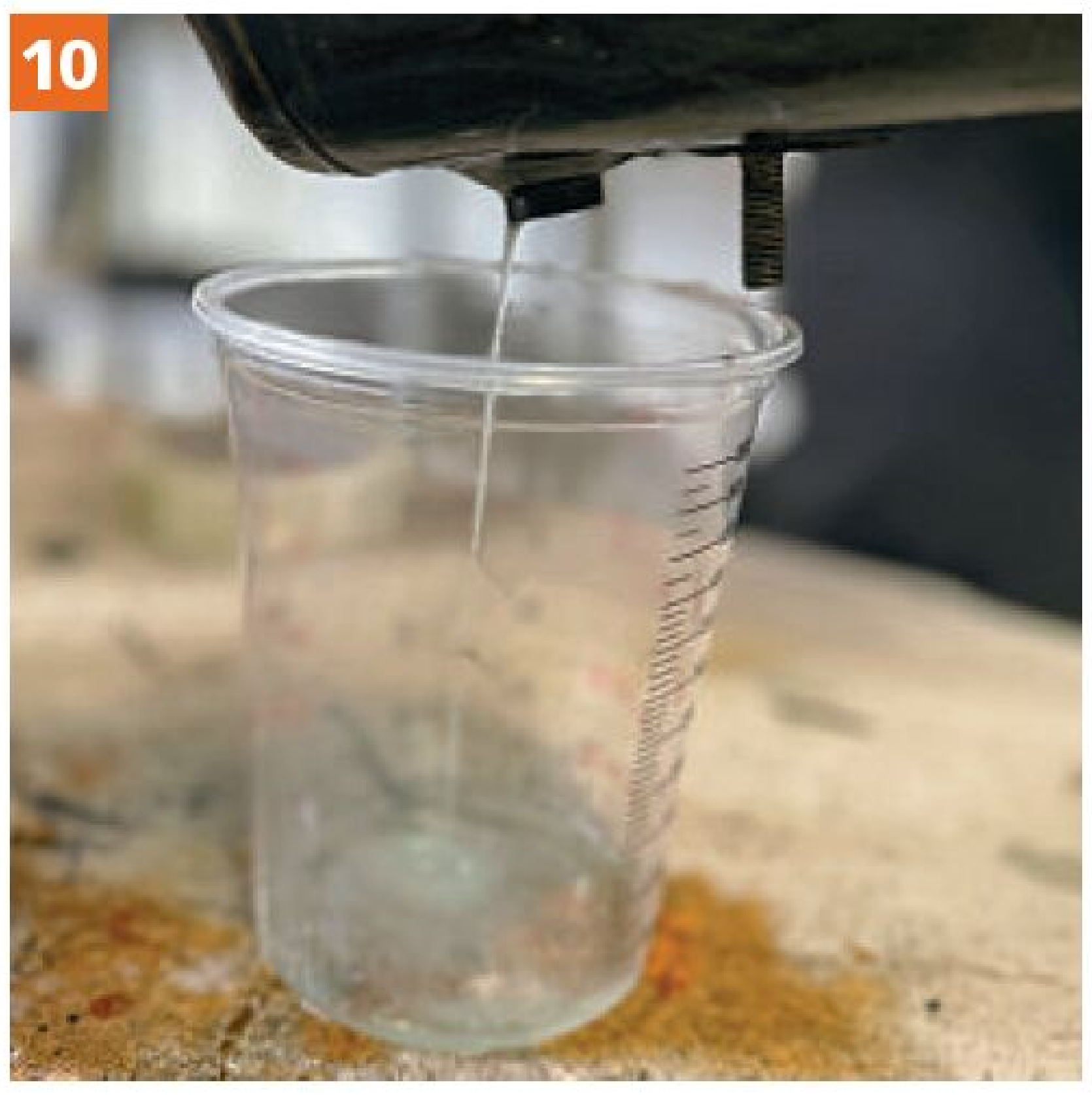

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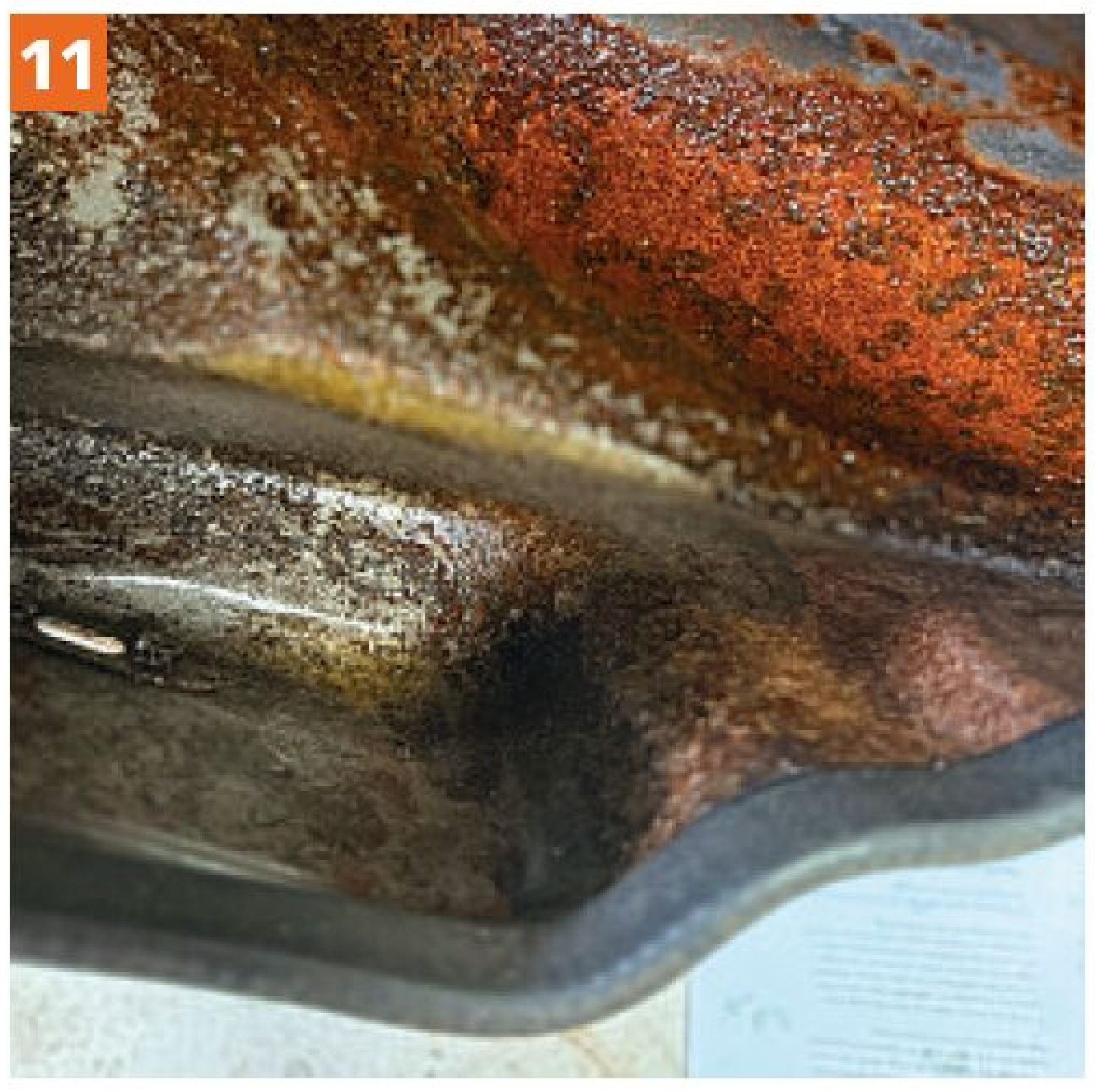
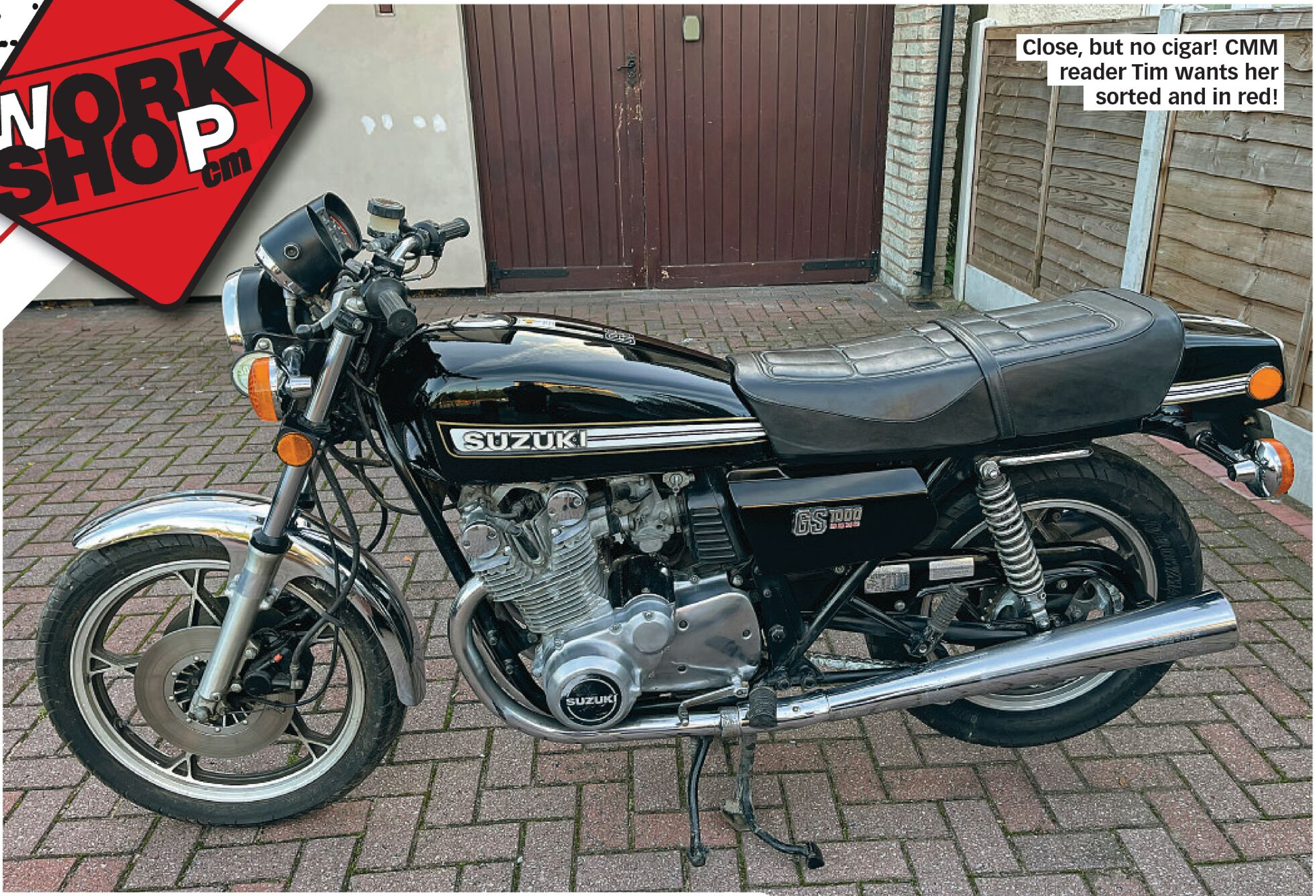




Close, but no cigar! CMM reader Tim wants her sorted and in red!

WORDS AND PICS: **ANDY BOLAS**

Project Suzuki GS1000 Part 2

Back from Black!

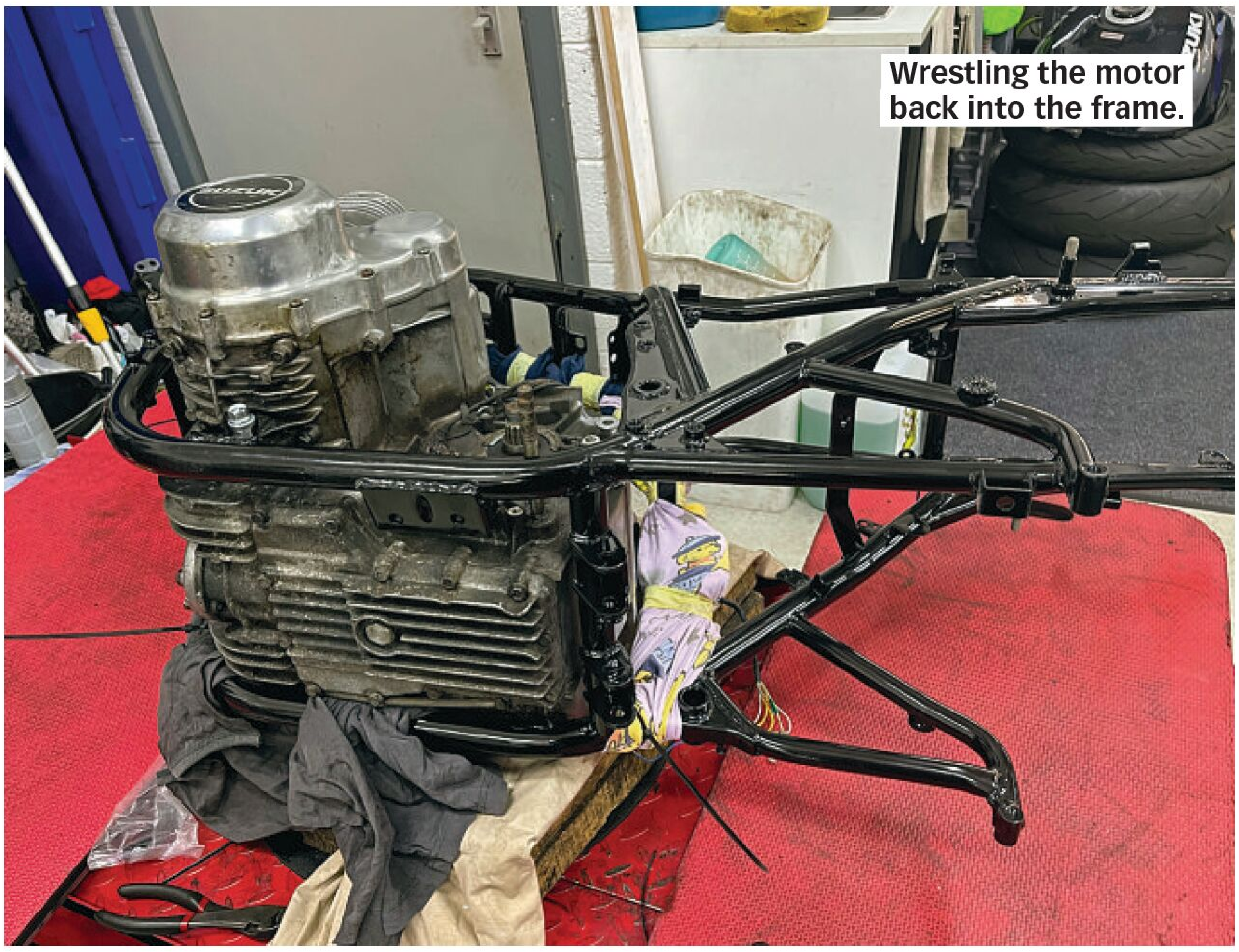
Andy Bolas is sorting CMM reader Tim Claridge's Suzuki GS1000. Much needs to be done – not least a colour change!

First, a quick recap. Back in the August 2024 issue I reported that this Suzuki GS1000 was being sorted out by me for friend and CMM reader Tim Claridge.

And so, we move on! Recently, it's like Christmas at Bolas towers with various parcels of parts being delivered and suppliers sending refinished parts back to me.

The powder-coating has come out really well, as has the plating of the fasteners. First job with this lot is to clean all the threads out with a tap so they are ready to receive the replated bolts. Interesting job now of getting the engine back in the frame and just like its removal, the engine didn't make things easy. In the end we had to put the engine on its side, drop the frame over it, put a few engine mounting bolts through and popped the nuts on.

While the frame was on its side I took the opportunity to fit the centre-stand.

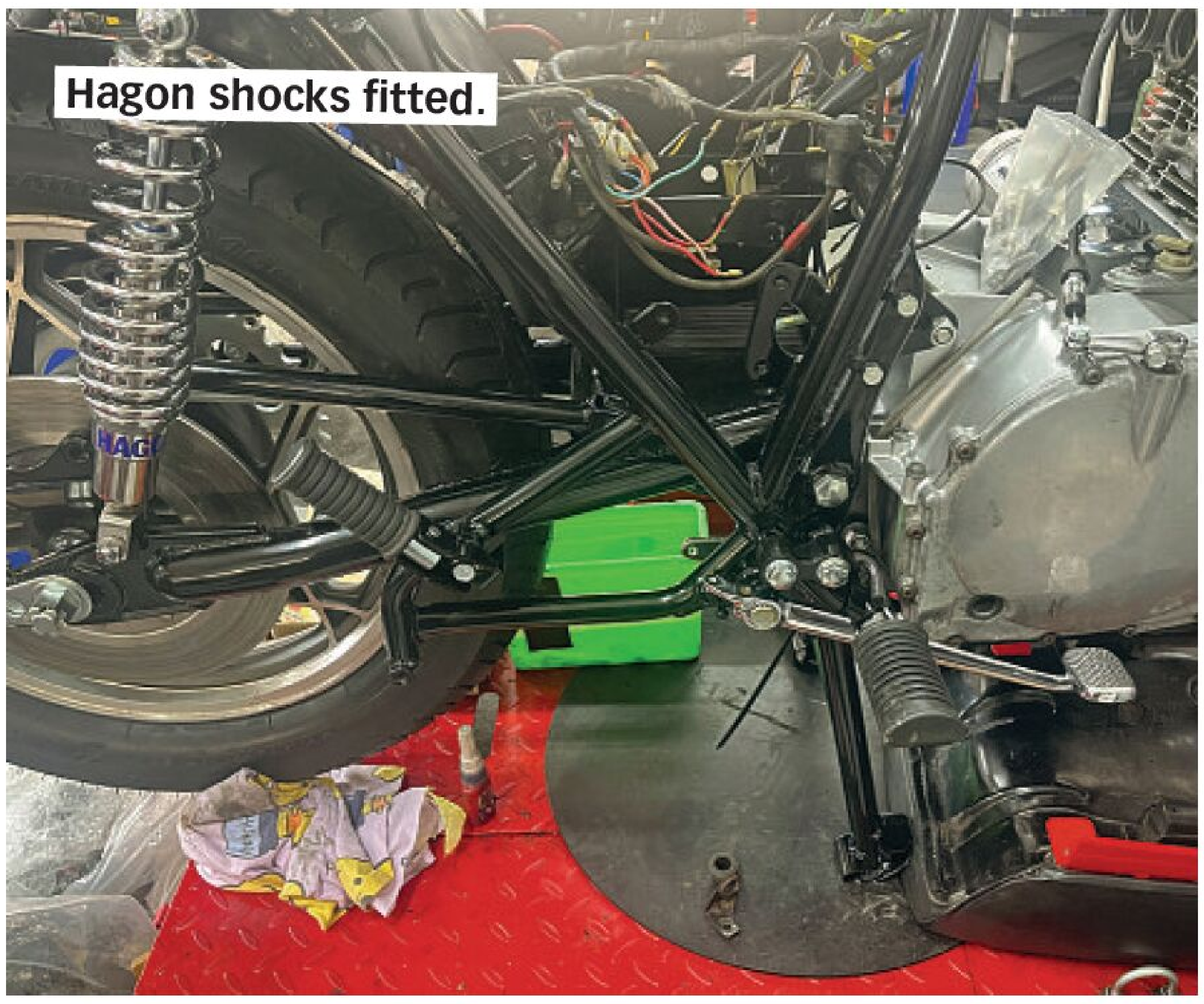


Wrestling the motor back into the frame.

Swingarm finally fitted into the Suzuki's frame.

Top yoke painted.

Shiny bits!



Hagon shocks fitted.

She's coming together.

Tony (Gofton) and me then turned the bike over and put it on its stand with a couple of blocks under the engine to steady the bike so we could attach its running gear. Once the frame had the engine in and the stand attached, I cleaned all the threads with the appropriate tap to remove any powder-coat or blast media. Then I fitted the top and bottom races ready for top and bottom yokes to be fitted, before bolting it all together both top and bottom bearings were treated to a liberal coating of grease.

Then I turned my attention to the swingarm, fitting new bearings and greased them up ready to fit the swingarm itself into the frame. With the swingarm loosely fitted, I dug the rear shocks out of the box, and they looked a little worse for wear. A quick call to Tony Hutchison at Hagon and a pair of shocks were posted out quick-sharp! Talk about good service... the rear shocks were with me the next day and looked absolutely spot on.

With the new shocks fitted, the rear-end was now supporting itself and we could start attaching more bits and pieces like the refurbed front forks which had been polished, rechromed and fitted with Hagon progressive fork springs. Which, as you can see, look great. Before I forget, it's time to make sure everything is bolted up tightly as I had just loosely fitted the rear-end initially. Next the inner and outer rear mudguard were slotted in and bolted up after having a wipe down.

The wiring loom was given a good clean and checkover before being fitted to the bike, connected up and clipped in place as required.

Things were going well, with the restoration progressing, but then there's always something waiting to throw a spanner in the works. This just so happened to be the chroming.

To start with, the parts were supposed to be ready in a few weeks. After six weeks they hadn't been started, which was rather frustrating to say the least. After a very long while I received a call to say that everything was ready to collect but there were a couple of issues I would need to see. Upon arrival, I was presented with the exhaust silencers which had been chromed but had a couple of holes in, but apparently everything else was spot-on and I could take it away. I took the exhausts to a company called Faffs welding and the guys there repaired the exhausts while I waited; they didn't charge the earth either! So, back to the chromers with them and I decided that before taking the other parts away I would

Forks always need lot of care!

Front master-cylinder painted...

Freshly painted up rear master cylinder.

Frame, and bottom yoke and bearings fitted.

Front and rear brake calipers painted up.

As good as new: front brake calipers assembled.

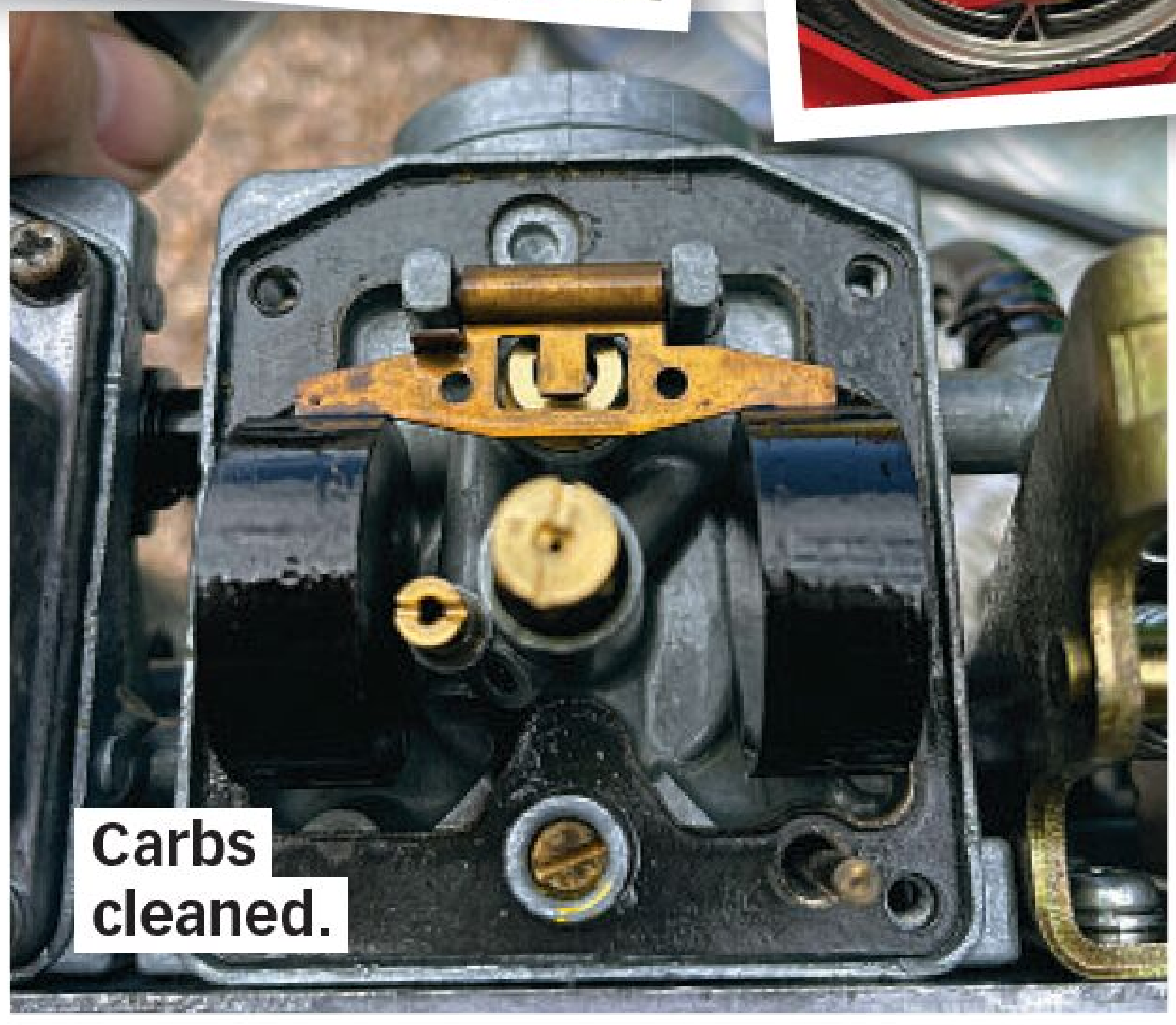
The GS1000's carbs get a good dip in the ultrasonic bath.

Clocks fitted.

Front wheel in.

Ella fills the oil up.

D.I.D
PROFESSIONAL O-RING
MADE IN JAPAN
630V
New chain.


Carbs cleaned.

check them. A bloody good job I did as the front mudguard had a hole in the leading edge. This had not been noticed and would need to have the chrome removed before it could be welded up, so I would have to return in a couple of days to pick up the mudguard and get it repaired.

Well, when I returned for the bare mudguard, much to my shock I was presented with a very poorly looking part. As you can see in the picture, the front edge now resembles a bloody tea bag! Back to the helpful guys at Faffs. I had to leave the mudguard in their capable hands, but sadly after trying many techniques the guys couldn't do anything with it as the metal was too thin. Instead, the corrosion was cut out and a new piece fabricated into the contours of the guard. Sadly, while the guys had tried their best, the repair wouldn't be good enough to chrome over so it was back to the drawing board. I think I will stick to plastic bikes after this one!

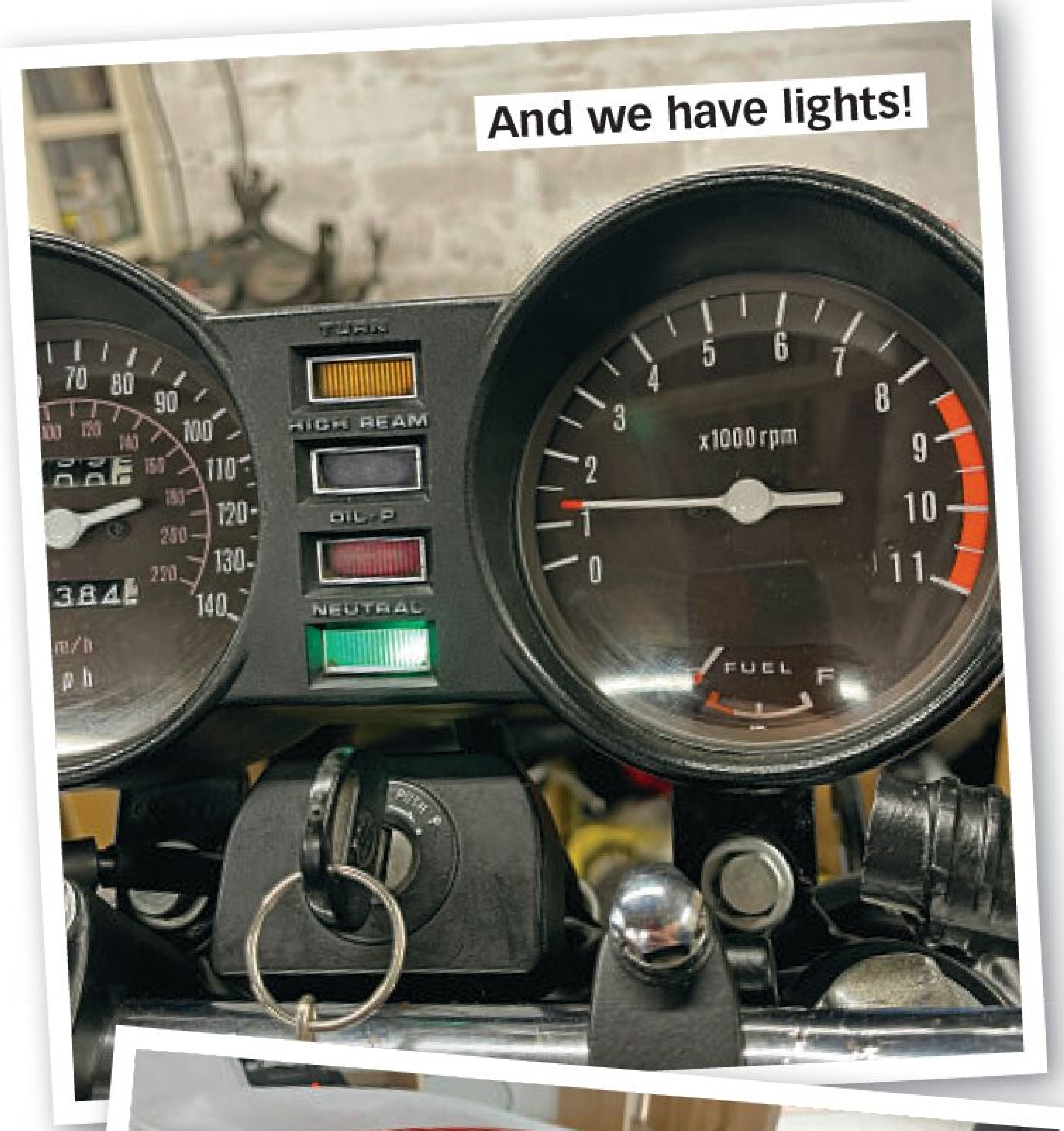
A new front mudguard was not an option as I couldn't locate one, let alone a used one. I returned to the chromer's and collected the exhausts, etc., and told them that I would be back over as soon as I could sort out a suitable front guard. To be honest, none of the chromed parts were how I expected them to be, but I showed pictures of the items to future owner Tim, and he was happy enough with them, which was a huge relief on my part. Eventually, a front mudguard came up in Spain so I rolled the dice and took a chance on it. Luckily when it arrived it was as described. This was then taken over to be plated.

A rather pleasant surprise though, was how quickly the bodywork was turned around. Dream Machine have done a cracking job for me on this one and as requested by Tim Claridge, I have had it painted red rather than its original black colour scheme. The bodywork looks unbelievably fresh now. I have ended up replacing lots of the rubber grommets as most had gone brittle or were already damaged, and various other fasteners as some were not genuine parts. I have to say I am amazed at what is available for this old machine.

The brake lines were well past their sell-by date so I ordered a new set from Richard Hocking at CP Racetech... excellent service and value, and definitely a company I will use again. Whilst on brakes, the rear caliper was looking very shabby and both pistons were solid. The pistons had to be removed with compressed air (always be careful) and the caliper body was then stripped of paint along with the rear master cylinder. These were then cleaned up and any holes or surfaces that would need masking were masked off and treated to a few thin coats of Simonize tough Black paint and allowed to dry in the sun. Whenever you are doing a job like this it's the prep that helps the end result.

A repair kit was then ordered from Wemoto. Unfortunately, the rubber boots that go over the piston were the wrong size and would not allow the pistons to push back far enough to allow the fitment of brake pads. Then I ordered a rebuild kit from Powerhouse and this kit was spot-on.

Once this kit was fitted, the caliper was bolted back together and attached to the bike. Then I rebuilt the repainted rear master cylinder before bolting it to the frame.



And we have lights!

Painted tank.

Painted tail-piece.

A new chain was fitted along with new stainless tab washers on the rear sprocket, and all three disks were held on with the replated bolts. The front calipers were in much better condition than the rear but were still treated to new seals and stainless pistons from Powerhouse again. The bodies were in great condition so were just cleaned up.

The front master cylinder was seized and, like the rear caliper, required air assistance to be removed. Once this was stripped it was cleaned up, masked, prepped and repainted. Then I treated it to a rebuild kit.

Next, I turned my attention to the carbs. These were treated to a session in the ultrasonic bath as they were very grubby externally, then blown out with air-line before being fitted with new jets and needle valves.

Once reassembled and fitted to the bike, the air-box carb rubbers seemed a little hard to say the least so I might see if there's a suitable replacement on the market.

Now on to the engine! The oil filter was removed and replaced with a new Hiflow filter and new O-ring seal. Ella Middleton then treated the engine to fresh Silkolene 10-40 semi-synthetic oil.

Another new battery was fitted as the first one was misplaced, and the carbs connected up to a dummy tank and away she went. The carbs could probably do with balancing but other than that it sounds happy enough. Also, I thought with everything else looking nice and fresh, a new speedo cable wouldn't go amiss. I ordered one from Wemoto and it is too short: another item to return!

In the end I gave the original cable a clean-up and it's good to go. Usually the Slinky Glide cables Wemoto supply are spot-on. I have replaced all the other cables on the bike with them and had no issues.

Next job was the fuel tap. Again, the one sent out by Wemoto didn't fit so I needed to contact them. Hopefully, the front mudguard will be sorted, as that's holding me up. The front and rear brakes need bleeding up and checking, then I need to fit a new front brake light switch. Oh, I also need to clean the fuel tank out with some Deox C as I can see a few rust patches!

Then I will get the bike booked in for MoT at AG Autos, give it a spin and then check everything over before the bike goes to its new home! I can see light at the end of the tunnel… **cmm**

Thanks to:

- Dream Machine – for top-quality paintwork and bodywork repairs: 0115 973 6615
- Richard Hocking @ CP Racetec for the new chain and the made-to-measure braided brake lines: 07528 513538
- Powerhouse brakes for caliper seals and pistons. etc. (They will also completely refurb you calipers for you.): 01246 260665
- Wemoto for pattern parts: 01273 597072
- Tony Gofton @ AG Autos for the use of his lovely workshop. For MoTs and servicing call 01889 577952
- Simon Pinfield @ Chase Superbikes for the tyres: 01543 466416
- Shaun Pearson @ SP Vapour Blasting for welding and vapour blasting: 07955 775162
- Mark Fernyhough @ Rugeley Powder Coating: 01889 586672
- Parkfield Electroplating: 01902 865654

As you would expect, it's top-notch paintwork from the Dream Machine lot!

Red looks better!

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IN YOUR SYMPATHETICALLY RESTORED *CMM!*

1982 KAWASAKI GPz750: Steve Cooper heads back to the 1980s and loves it!

LAVERDA JOTA AT 50: From the people who know...

KAWASAKI KMX125: Buyer's Guide on the green-lane meanie

SHOW US YOURS AND THE WAY WE WERE: Win a T-shirt for sending us your nostalgic waffle!

PROJECT BIKES: We will be showcasing some of the following (space allowing): Mark Haycock's **Honda CB400 Four**; Steve Cooper's **Ducati/Suzuki special** or **Rickuki**; Jeff Ware's **Honda CBR900RR FireBlade** or **Suzuki GSX-R750F**. Then there's Ralph Ferrand with his **Kawasaki Z900 Special** or new project **Moto Guzzi Le Mans Mk.1**. Will Hollman's **Yamaha DT360** will be back, and maybe Andy Bolas' **Suzuki GS1000** and **Suzuki SV650S**. And what about Shaun Nielsen's exotic **Ducati 996SPS?**

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*The editor reserves the right to completely mess up the above list in a bid to give you the best mix of 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s machines and fettling tips!

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I know, I know, but sometimes we need to shuffle precision and intent about a bit… Let me explain.

On greeting Georgie Fame to Ringway Airport (now Manchester Airport, it was a long time ago) the local Wigan Daily newshound clattered out a greeting/ declaration of hostilities/weather warning to Georgie thus: 'A't fain tha's leet I' Wigin lad?' Nobody, Georgie included, had a clue what he was going on about. It made all the sense of a speech by 'The Donald' on human rights, or flower arranging.

On the back of that, I wholeheartedly (pushing it) apologise for all the falsehoods, psycho-babble and tall tales I've inflicted on you, my poor reader (must be one, surely!) over the last 10 years (and counting.) I'm minded of the occasional reference to Bernoulli's Theorem, and maybe even a bit of second-rate maths, possibly comparing fuel flow or exhaust rates; these little puzzles frequently highlight flaws, deficiencies and, occasionally, happy mistakes. Just remember Cross Sectional Area of a circle is Pi x D squared divided by four, or 0.786 times D squared…Oh, am I doing it again? Soz, as the kids say.

But there's more, apart from the above. I've often interspersed waffle with unintelligible slang, racer-speak and unknowable colloquialisms that even blokes I've grown up wi' find difficult to make either head, or even tail of. I mean, when I refer to 'the 1320', obviously I mean the hallowed 440 yards that make up a traditional drag strip (440 x 3 =1320 feet), and if I say 'nitro' I don't mean 'nitrous'. 'Nitro' is the second cousin to TNT (Tri Nitro Toluene: $C7H5N3O6$), whereas nitrous refers to nitrous oxide ($N2O$) which is simply a carrier of oxygen to enhance combustion. Nitro, on the other hand, is the stuff of legend. Used in top fuel bikes and cars, it's the elixir of horsepower for a very select bunch of nutters who can never go back to methanol or, heaven forfend, petrol!

It's not nice stuff, and if you ever get downwind of a fueller (bike or car using nitro methane) and your eyes sting and your throat smarts, that'll be the excess bits of nitro combining with the moisture in your body to create a form of nitric acid, which, last time I checked, wasn't good for humans, very not good!

Now, I hate assumption (mother of all good cock-ups) but I do assume that if either of you reading this is still awake you are almost certainly either more intelligent than me, or you're going to be, and this is just an extension of a very informal classroom, so I'll continue as long as Bertie and 'im upstairs will allow. Also, I want to make you smile, chuckle, shout and occasionally scream when I lie or just cock-up.

Very occasionally I glance at a couple of my old columns and this week it was the turn of 'Cowclap Corner' back in March 2013. In it, Jim and Robert fell off Rob's G9 Matchy on a slathering (that's more than a little, but less than a lot) of cow shot on a corner that was tricky enough without a dose of PTFE like cow poo; with the aforementioned it was near lethal! I think the very substantial Matchless foot-pegs made a greater impression on the blacktop than vice versa. Quite how I managed to incorporate 'My Ma Killed a Seagull' (October 2012) into my words leaves me rather puzzled. I simply thought it was a vaguely amusing incident (not, I hasten to add for the poor seagull), and I then snuffled around for a way to incorporate it in amongst all the other rubbish, in the vain hope that it might curl someone's lip. Still not sure if it did.

The answer to the newshound's query? 'A't fain, etc.'. Georgie's response might have been: Yes I'm absolutely delighted to have returned to the place of my birth, thank you very much… but, like the rest of us, he didn't have a clue!

Okay, as this is a motorcycle-themed column in a serious motorcycle-themed magazine, here's a hot tip: You've got this unfamiliar bike that won't quite behave and looking at the carb you can see a little brass air-screw sticking up at a jaunty angle, but which way to turn it? Easy. If you have to stab the choke to keep it running we can assume it's on the lean side (or the carb rubber is split, loose, or incorrectly fitted). Now, if the screw is A: between slide and inlet manifold, it's a fuel screw, or B: if it is upriver of the slide, i.e. on the air-filter side, it will be an air-screw, therefore to richen the mixture as A: screw out ¼ turn, and B: screw in ¼ turn, job done! Or possibly not, as the reasons for a lean mixture are many and varied: worn slide, worn carb body, loose carb top, missing. Sorry, I'm out of my word alloc… **cmm**

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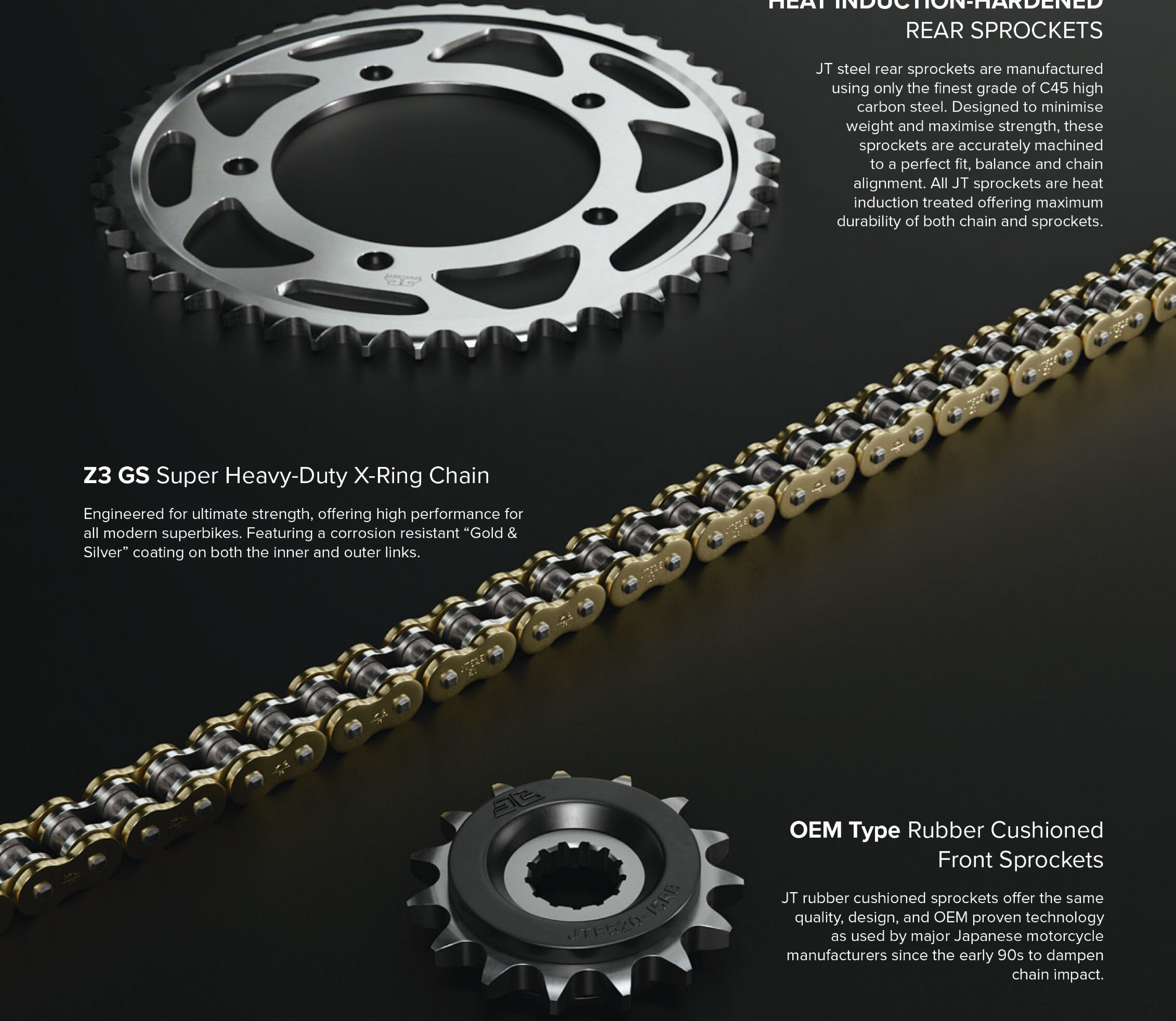

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